

Update on Reopening for In-person Worship
13th June 2020

Many of us are longing to get back to our campus to worship together in person. A plan to regather is moving forward. Your patience is appreciated as we devise a strategy that will be intentional, safe, just, and responsive.

The bishop has requested that each parish in the Diocese of California convene a Phased Regathering Team which will submit a plan to adapt diocesan guidelines for their particular church circumstances to reopen for in-person worship. The team for St Stephen's Church assembled for its initial meeting via Zoom conference on Wednesday night. Chaired by Dr. Philip Norris, the team also includes Drs. Jennie Taylor, Ted Lynch and John Engstrom; Diana Long and Chris Mudge; the Rev'ds Phillip Ellsworth and Christine Trainor.

The committee will outline a proposal based on their expertise, Marin County Health Orders <https://coronavirus.marinhhs.org/> and diocesan guidelines <https://diocal.org/covid-19-advisories>.

The initial plan will focus on an outdoor service (Marin County has prohibited indoor services). Initial services would act as small trial runs, likely involving committee members at first, to identify how traffic flow and touchpoints could be optimized for safety. Tentatively, the committee envisions trial services beginning mid-July.

Live-streaming of services will continue as a permanent worship option. This format has proven highly responsive and successful for reaching congregants who may still find it too risky to return, people whose schedules and life circumstances prevent them from attending, worshippers who live too far away to attend in person, and new people who have joined because livestream worship works well for them.

It was acknowledged that dates and practices may shift depending on the pace of the COVID-19 epidemic, and that once started, in-person services may need to be halted if community transmission changes.

Christine Trainor