

What to expect when returning to St. Thomas the Apostle

It has been almost 6 months since we have had in person worship at St. Thomas the Apostle, It will be good to be back together on September 6th. Because we remain in the midst of the pandemic the experience of Sunday morning worship will be different, the below is to outline what to expect upon arrival through to the end of the service.

Before you come: Perform a self screening and assessment about COVID risk. Make sure you feel comfortable coming, joining the live stream remains a good option for those who are immunocompromised or otherwise concerned about coming. If you answer yes to any of the following three questions you will not be permitted entry, so please stay home

1. Have you or anyone in your household/bubble travelled outside of Canada in the past 14 days?
2. Have you or anyone in your household/bubble tested positive for COVID-19 or had close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 without wearing appropriate PPE?
3. Do you have any of the following symptoms? Fever, New onset of cough, Worsening chronic cough, Shortness of breath, Difficulty breathing, Sore throat, Difficulty swallowing, Decrease of loss of sense of taste or smell, Chills, Headaches, Unexplained fatigue/malaise/muscle aches (myalgias), Nausea/vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, Pink eye (conjunctivitis), Runny nose or nasal congestion without other known cause.

If you do come please bring a mask and be prepared to wear it throughout the whole service unless you have a medical contraindication.

Children and families are most welcome, but there is no in person Sunday school so children will be required to remain with their parents.

The church will be cleaned and sanitized completely before each service.

When you arrive:

Upon arrival at the church please follow the signs to the main church entrance, there will be only one entrance open for the church, unless you need to use the elevator to access the church, then please let the outdoor coordinator know so they can assist you getting into the building. When you arrive at the entrance you will be met by the screener who will ask you a series of questions about COVID: 1) Have you or anyone in your household/bubble travelled outside of Canada in the past 14 days?; 2) Have you or anyone in your household/bubble tested positive for COVID-19 or had close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 without wearing appropriate PPE?; 3) Do you have any of the following symptoms?. If you answer yes to any of those questions you will not be permitted entry.

Please sanitize your hands.

After screening you will move to the registration desk, where your name and contact information will be recorded. This is so that Public Health can contact you if there is a case of COVID-19 among those who attended the service. After 30 days the records will be destroyed.

If you have an offering envelope there will be a plate where you can leave your offering, we will not be passing the plate during the service.

After registering you will be pick up the order of service (no books will be used in this time) and escorted to a seat by an usher. All seats will be socially distant from each other.

During the Service:

There are significant restrictions in Amber Phase of the Diocesan pandemic plan. You will need to keep your mask on. There is no singing, as a result the music will be limited, and will be a soloist only. You will remain in your seat till communion, if you wish to receive communion you will be signaled by the usher. Communion will be in one kind (bread) and distributed by the celebrant at the bottom of the chancel steps. As you move up and back please ensure you are maintaining a 6 foot distance between people. After you receive the bread wafer you may remove your mask to eat the wafer, then replace your mask and return to your seat via the arrows and direction of the ushers. During the service you are free to speak out the responses to the various liturgical elements. There will be one washroom available for use – if you need to use the washroom please proceed to the front right door of the church where an usher can point you to the available washroom. Note: the washroom will not be sanitized between uses during the service, so use at own risk and practice hand hygiene.

When you leave:

When the service is over the church will be emptied row by row starting at the back of the church as directed by the usher. Persons will not be allowed to linger in the church after the service, to ensure all persons can leave and be socially distant. During Amber Phase there will be no coffee hour or other post church activities. Please take your order of service home with you or deposit in the recycling bin at the back of the church on your departure, do not leave in the pews.

Concluding thoughts:

It is important that all parishioners remember that continuing to join the church service via the live stream is a good option where there is concern about the risk in gathering together again. As we move into the fall the procedures detailed above will be modified as we get experience of what works for St. Thomas. Our intention is to make the in person service experience the best and safest possible given the restrictions. Your cooperation is an important part of us ensuring that no one who comes to an in person service at St. Thomas gets sick.