

Outdoor Worship at St. Mary of the Hills in a Season of Pandemic

July 2020

Since March 13, public worship has remained suspended at St. Mary of the Hills, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our liturgical life as a parish community has continued via Zoom and YouTube throughout the seasons of Lent, Eastertide, and the beginning of Ordinary Time. These technologies have also allowed us to continue other connections, including Coffee Minute, Rector's Forum, Vestry meetings, and other parish events.

In the weeks ahead, we will begin to carefully resume public worship outside, with deliberate planning, and only in small groups. While this will allow us to once again experience some common rhythms of our liturgical life, including celebration of the Holy Eucharist, it does mean that we won't yet be able to gather as a complete body. For this reason, Sunday morning worship will remain online only, so that the whole congregation can be united in our prayers and praises.

What follows are some initial guidelines for small, outdoor gatherings for worship. As we begin to gather, we will no doubt learn more and need to revisit and revise these plans and guidelines.

'Communion in the Close'

+ Attendance at each service is limited to 8 households and no more than 20 individuals total (including the celebrant). Registration must be completed online.

Should a service need to be cancelled or postponed because of inclement weather, a decision will be made no later than thirty minutes prior to the service; notification will be sent via e-mail to those registered.

+ Anyone experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, or who might have been in contact with someone who has the virus, should not attend. Additionally, individuals who are at high-risk, or share their home with someone at high risk, should carefully consider whether or not to attend a service.

+ All in attendance must wear a facial mask that covers both mouth and nose completely.

+ Six feet of physical distance must be maintained at all times by individuals who do not share the same household. White flags mark the eight spaces for each household.

+ Seating will not be provided. Individuals should bring their own chairs.

+ Households should fill in from the front of the worship space to limit contact.

+ Bulletins will be placed prior to the service and should be deposited in the recycling bin upon leaving the service or taken home.

+ Services will not include music at this time.

+ The peace may be exchanged only through gestures that do not require movement or touching those outside one's own household. Waving or bowing to one another are appropriate.

+ An offering box will be placed at the entrance; alms basins will not be passed during the liturgy.

+ The celebrant will come to each household and use pincers (tongs) to administer communion to prevent close contact. Please receive the consecrated host in the hand and wait for the celebrant to move on before removing masks to consume the bread.

Communion will be administered in one kind, bread, only. Anglican teaching has long upheld that receiving communion in one kind only (only bread or only wine) is to have received the sacrament in its entirety.

+ Households should leave the Close one at a time at the conclusion of the liturgy, allowing those closest to the entrance to exit first. (Jesus promised that the last shall be first...) For the safety of the whole community, please do not linger in the Close following the service.

+ The celebrant will not remain in the Close following the service to greet the congregation and engage in conversation. If you'd like to speak further, please contact the celebrant individually to set up an appointment.