



St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.— John 13:34

This is a January 19 update of the January 7 message we sent about health and safety.

All of us are weary of the pandemic and its continuing effects on our lives. We are frustrated and disappointed to be experiencing increasing COVID test positivity rates and hospitalizations again. We remain committed to providing core functions as we take steps to prevent the transmission of illness during activities at St. Stephen's Church. We ask for and appreciate your continuing patience, and for your understanding that these measures are taken, not out of fear, but prudently and with concern for the well-being of all who come to St. Stephen's for any reason, and for the well-being of our community. High rates of COVID hospitalizations do not simply affect those patients, but others whose unrelated illnesses or injuries cannot be treated because of a lack of resources.

We know that one source of frustration—we share it—is the need for continual reevaluation and recalibration as public health data change and inform decisions. Yet it is important to be flexible and responsive to what we learn.

We hope you will stay informed through the **eSpirit** (our weekly email newsletter), the **Spirit** (our printed Sunday newsletter), our Web site (ststephensRVA.org) and our Facebook page ([ststephensRVA](https://www.facebook.com/ststephensRVA)).

We will continue the following:

In-person worship will continue on Sundays, according to our regular schedule.

We will continue to livestream services at 11:15 a.m., 5:30 p.m., and 8 p.m.

Weekday Morning Prayer will continue, with all participants fully masked, including worship leaders.

Masks will continue to be required for all taking part in worship indoors. This is regardless of vaccination status. While some congregations are requiring proof of vaccination in order to enter the church, we are not doing so. Since there are people in our midst who are unvaccinated for various reasons, it is important that all of us be masked at all times. We recommend N95 or KN95 masks; these masks are not only effective, but they do not slip down the nose as many other types of masks do.

Through February 6, we will take the following measures:

During worship services, singing will be done by a small choir (all of whom are vaccinated) on behalf of the congregation. There will be no congregational singing.

Entrance doors may remain open to promote air flow.

The Sunday Forum, formation for children and youth, and the nursery, are paused.

The parish house, including the office, is closed to the public.

Staff will work according to their normal schedules and respond to emails and voice mails; some will be on site while others will work from home, on a set schedule.

The phone will be answered during regular office hours, though at times it will be answered remotely.

The clergy will continue to provide pastoral care, and a priest will be on call for pastoral emergencies, as always.

There will be no gatherings in the parish house, with the following exceptions:

- 12-Step groups may continue to meet. The continuation of these groups is critical for the well-being of their participants.
- Food ministry volunteers may be indoors, fully masked, to sort, bag, and distribute groceries for our weekly food pantry and fruit ministry. Our food ministries are essential to those experiencing insecurity.
- The discernment committee may conduct listening sessions with small groups of parishioners who are safely distanced and masked. The work of this committee is time-sensitive and we want to do what we can to allow it to continue uninterrupted.
- May Fair House cooking volunteers who are fully vaccinated may cook, masked at all times, in St. Stephen's kitchen.

We hope that Emmaus groups, Bible study groups, prayer groups and other small groups will be able to meet outdoors, weather permitting, or via Zoom or other virtual platform.

May Fair House and Farmers Market

The new post-holiday opening date for May Fair House is Tuesday, January 25. At that time, shoppers may order May Fair House food by telephone, 804.282.3004, for curbside pick-up. Indoor shopping will not be permitted at this time.

The farmers market will continue outdoors on Saturdays, 9 a.m.-noon.

We hope and pray for this surge to recede soon. For now, please attend worship in person if you are comfortable doing so, or watch the livestream if you feel safer at home. And please do what you can to stay healthy and keep others healthy by getting vaccinated, boosted, and being diligent about masks and distancing.

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.—Galatians 6:2