

Hardin Valley Ward Knoxville Tennessee Stake

Dear Hardin Valley Ward Family,

We miss you all very much and are grateful that the stake has permitted us to begin returning to in-person worship services. These past few months have presented us with unique opportunities to increase our spiritual growth by focusing on our Savior, Jesus Christ, and finding ways to increase the Holy Spirit's presence in our homes. We have been promised, by a living prophet and apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ, that we will overcome the current pandemic. Consistent with this promise is the chance for us to begin again in "[meeting] together oft to partake of bread and [water] in remembrance of the Lord Jesus." (Moroni 6:6). To assemble, as a body of saints, we must do so in a manner consistent with safety guidelines prescribed by the local government and the direction from our church leaders. We promise you blessings in your individual and family lives as you strive to continue to focus on the Savior, follow the Plan of Redemption, and listen to the voice of a living prophet.

We look forward to a time where we can meet again, as a ward family, free from the present constraints. We are grateful to those who join with us to make this a meaningful and safe return to meeting together.

With Love,

The Hardin Valley Ward Bishopric

Guidelines for Resumed Sunday Gatherings - Phase 1

We are grateful for the guidance of the First Presidency, Area Presidency, and Stake Presidency to guide us as we begin meeting again as members of the Hardin Valley Ward. The direction below is consistent with the guidelines given from each of these presidencies. Our Ward will implement these guidelines in an effort to create a safe and healthy environment for members who choose to gather together for sacrament meetings. Attending sacrament meetings during Phase 1 is optional. We recognize that some members and families will choose not to participate at this time. Members should not feel obligated to attend in-person services. Members are authorized to continue to administer the Sacrament in their homes through July. At that point, we will re-evaluate plans for August. Should individuals, couples, or families choose to attend in-person services, we ask that you be true and faithful to the guidance provided below. The focus of our meetings has always been and will continue to be on the sacred administration of the Sacrament. We need every participating members' help to enable a safe return to in-person meetings.

The Stake Presidency has approved regular worship services for the first Sunday of each month (ordinarily fast and testimony meetings). Rather than meeting in person, our Ward will hold a virtual "Ward Meeting" on the first Sunday of each month at 12:00 p.m. Eastern Time. The Sacrament administration will occur in individual members' homes.

On the third Sunday of each month, the Ward, divided into three roughly equal groups, will meet for abbreviated Sacrament services with each group attending during an assigned time slot. We will limit each meeting to 40 minutes in duration. During Phase 1, the First Presidency has instructed that we restrict the number of individuals per sacrament service to 99 people. This number excludes children who are two years of age or younger. We have provided additional details below.

In-Person Worship Services - Third Sundays

We will hold abbreviated Sacrament services on the third Sunday of each month. Please see the timeslots below. We ask members to come at their appointed times based on the beginning letter of their last names.

Block 1: 9:00-9:40 a.m. (Members with last names beginning with A-C)

- Doors will be opened at 8:40 to begin sacrament preparation and seating.

Block 2: 10:30-11:10 a.m. (Members with last names beginning with D-O)

- Doors will be opened at 10:10 to begin sacrament preparation and seating.

Block 3: 12:00-12:40 p.m. (Members with last names beginning with P-Z)

- Doors will be opened at 11:40 to begin sacrament preparation and seating.

Before Coming to Church

Prior to arriving at the Stake Center, we invite all individuals and families to do the following:

1. Due to health-related concerns and potentially limited seating, we ask ward members with visitors from out of town either to remain at home and hold Sacrament in the home or otherwise ask visitors to stay at home while your family attends sacrament meeting.
2. Those who are investigating the church are welcome to participate in our in-person services (with the missionaries or with your family). Please notify a member of the Bishopric regarding inviting others to church to ensure that we remain below the 99-person cap per meeting (per the First Presidency's direction). Please share these guidelines so those investigating can join us in creating a safe environment for worship services.
3. Conduct a health check for each family member. Members should use good judgment and not participate if they have a fever/chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, have a temperature of 100.4 or higher, or are feeling sick in any way.
4. Encourage all family members to use the restroom before coming to church. Although restrooms will not be closed, using the bathroom before coming to church may reduce contact with high touch areas.
5. Wash hands and bring hand sanitizer for you and your family members. We will have hand sanitizer stations in the building as well.
6. Members are encouraged to wear face coverings. Priesthood holders administering the Sacrament are required to wear a face-covering during the administration of the Sacrament.

Arriving at Church

Upon arriving at the Stake Center, we invite all individuals and families to do the following:

1. Although members may park anywhere, our Ward will only enter the building through the doors on the EAST side of the building - the side of the building with our bishop's and clerks' offices.
2. We ask ward members to remain in their vehicles until the ushers open the doors to escort members into the building. We will post a sign reminding members to only come at their designated times, based on their last names.
3. The following individuals will be allowed to enter the building early:
 - a. Assigned ushers
 - b. Those participating in the preparation, blessing, and passing of the Sacrament
4. To limit contact with door handles, please allow an usher to open the door for your family.
5. Upon entering the foyer, there will be a hand sanitizer station. We ask all members to please use this station to sanitize their hands.
6. Please allow the ushers to guide your family to a seat in the chapel.
7. The stake presidency has asked that we first seat families in the middle pews, with family units seated at least 6 feet apart. Benches in the middle of the chapel will be filled first by placing families in the middle of the pew and filling in each end as space permits. Families with small children who anticipate potentially needing to get up to take a child out of the Sacrament meeting should indicate to the usher a need to have a seat at the end of an aisle rather than being seated in the middle.

8. When seated, please encourage family members to avoid too frequent touching of various surfaces. Encourage reverence during the prelude music while ushers help families to their seats and while the priesthood holders prepare the Sacrament.

Sacrament Meetings - Phase 1

General Meeting Guidelines

Sacrament meetings during Phase 1 will be different from our regular services. The focus will be on the ordinance of the Sacrament.

1. Members should maintain social distancing practices at all times and should strive to remain with family units. Typically, members will greet one another with handshakes or visit before Sacrament meeting begins. We ask members to **avoid** handshakes, hugs, or other forms of contact within the building. Members should also remain in their seats throughout the meeting, with exceptions being restroom use or helping a small child who is crying or noisy.
2. Please do NOT bring food, drinks, or electronic items (other than a cell phone) into the chapel and building. Doing so will reduce cleaning requirements. If a child cannot go without food or drink during the Sacrament meeting, it may be best to wait until we begin Phase 2 to return to church.
3. The conducting priesthood authority will briefly provide instructions to members at the beginning of sacrament meetings that highlight the sacred nature of the Sacrament and explain the steps taken to protect everyone.
4. Sacrament meetings will begin with brief announcements from the bishopric member conducting the meeting, followed by an opening hymn, prayer, sacrament hymn, administration of the Sacrament, an adult or youth speaker, a closing hymn, and closing prayer. We ask those who stand at the podium to avoid touching the microphone or podium if possible. We will wipe down the podium with sanitizing wipes throughout the meeting.
5. Due to safety guidelines and to comply with direction from the stake presidency, we will not sing hymns during the meeting. The organist will play prelude music. There will be opening, Sacrament, and closing hymns. However, rather than sing, church members are invited to listen reverently, read the words of the hymn on their phones, sing the song in their heads, or hum along to the tune. We will remove all hymnals from the chapel during Phase 1.
6. Speakers will remain seated with their family and come to the podium only when it is time to deliver their talk. The speaker will rejoin their family after their remarks.
7. Those who speak at the podium, including those who conduct the meeting, offer prayers, or give talks, are permitted to remove face coverings while speaking into the microphone.
8. After the meeting, members will be dismissed by rows (starting in the back) to promote adherence to social distancing requirements. We encourage members to be mindful of time and reverence when dismissing so that we can begin cleaning for the next sacrament service. Upon exiting the east side of the building, we encourage members to continue to adhere to social distancing guidelines and be conscious of families arriving for the next meeting.

Administration of the Sacrament

Administration of the Sacrament during Phase 1 will follow strict guidelines to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all members of the congregation. We ask that those who participate in the administration

of the Sacrament wear protective masks throughout this administration. Per direction from the stake presidency, **we will not administer the Sacrament to those seated in the foyers**. Thus, we ask that all members be in their seats when the meeting begins and avoid being late or sitting in the foyer.

1. Upon arriving at the building, two priesthood holders (Teacher, Priest, Elder, or High Priest) will proceed to the sacrament preparation room to begin preparing the Sacrament. We ask those who participate in sacrament preparation and administration wear protective masks. Before preparing the Sacrament, priesthood holders will wash their hands with soap and water (following CDC guidelines). If they should touch their face while administering the Sacrament, they will re-sanitize their hands with hand sanitizer. To reduce touching of door surfaces, the sacrament preparation room door and chapel door near the sacrament table will remain propped open during sacrament preparation.
2. Before the beginning of the meeting (after the sacrament table has been prepared), two priesthood holders (Priest/Elder/High Priest) will take their seats behind the sacrament table. At this time, they will sanitize their hands. The stake presidency has asked that this sanitation be completed in view of members so they can see that this has taken place.
3. Before the beginning of the meeting (after the sacrament table has been prepared), six priesthood holders (Deacon, Teacher, Priest, Elder, or High Priest) will sit in designated rows (three per bench) and will sanitize their hands before administration of the Sacrament.
4. During the sacrament hymn, two priesthood holders will break the bread and place pieces in sacrament cups in water trays. They will stagger and space the containers to avoid potential touching from congregants. This process will likely take additional time to prepare the bread in this manner.
5. After the sacrament prayer on the bread has concluded, the three priesthood holders in Row 1 will come to the sacrament table (spaced in 6-foot intervals). Each will receive a tray and begin passing to their designated areas. Row 2 will then come to the sacrament table (spaced in 6-foot intervals). Each will receive a tray and start administering to their designated areas.
6. Rather than handing a tray to a family to pass down a row, priesthood holders will walk down vacant rows and offer each person the Sacrament individually. Individuals should take a cup of bread from the tray. Rather than returning the cups after eating the bread or drinking the water, parents or a designated family member will collect and hold onto the empty cups (used for both the bread and water). We will provide a wastebasket for members to discard their sacrament cups when exiting the chapel after the Sacrament meeting. We ask that parents not allow children to hold the cups during the meeting (as plastic cups can become quite noisy). Additionally, to adhere to sanitation guidelines, cups should not be left on pews.
7. Out of a desire to reduce the potential for unnecessary touching of additional bread and water cups, parents are **strongly encouraged** to retrieve bread and water cups for small children (older children and youth are likely okay).
8. After all members have received bread, the priesthood holders will line up on each side of the middle aisle of pews in threes at 6-feet apart. As the priesthood holders at the table stand, the priesthood holders on the west side of the central aisle of pews (those closest to the sacrament table) will come to the table and return their trays. Upon returning their trays, each priesthood holder will sanitize his hands with provided hand sanitizer at the front of the chapel. They will then walk back to the aisle on the left side of the middle pews. The east side (furthest from the sacrament table) will then come and return their trays and remain at the table for the blessing on the water. After returning their trays, each will use hand sanitizer before the prayer on the water occurs.

9. The priesthood holders blessing the Sacrament will sanitize their hands after the prayer on the water and prior to handing out the water trays.
10. After the sacrament prayer on the water has concluded, the three priesthood holders already at the sacrament table (spaced in 6-foot intervals) will each receive a tray and begin passing to their designated areas. The second group of priesthood holders will then come to the sacrament table (spaced in 6-foot intervals). Each will receive a tray and begin passing to their designated areas.
11. After all members have received the water, the priesthood holders will line up on each side of the middle aisle of pews in threes at 6-feet apart. As the priesthood holders at the table stand, the priesthood holders on the west side of the central aisle of pews (closest to the sacrament table) will come to the table and return their trays. Upon returning their trays, they will walk back to the aisle on the middle pews' left side. The east side (furthest from the sacrament table) will then come and return their trays and remain at the table until a member of the Bishopric gets up to announce the rest of the meeting. At this time, priesthood holders may sit with their families. We encourage them to be mindful of spacing as they return to their families.

Meeting Conclusion and Cleaning

It will be necessary for ward members to be mindful of the next group of ward members coming for in-person sacrament services. We invite members to depart the building as directed to allow ample time for cleaning and sanitizing before the next group arrives and is needing to be seated.

1. After a Sacrament meeting, a member of the Bishopric will stand at the podium and excuse each family row by row, consistent with the stake presidency's guidelines. Members should NOT assemble in the foyer and should avoid congregating in the parking lot.
2. We will have on-hand eight (8) bottles of sanitizing spray. Assigned members of the Elder's Quorum (the "cleaning crew") will sanitize the chapel after members have exited. They will disinfect each row with sanitizing solution and clean high-touch areas with sanitizing sprays or sanitizing wipes.
3. A team of two members of the Elders Quorum will clean and sanitize the trays used during the Sacrament administration. They will thoroughly wipe down each Sacrament tray, the sacrament preparation room, and place the trays back in the cupboards for the next group.
4. A team of two members of the Elders Quorum will wipe down high touch areas in the restrooms (sinks, toilet handles, and door handles). They will also wipe down the door handles from the chapel to the restrooms; in the event, members touched them on the way to the restroom.
5. We will also seek to sanitize other high-touch surfaces like doorknobs, light switches, drinking fountains (although out of order during Phase 1), bathrooms, the pulpit and microphone, the organ, and piano keys; using wipes rather than sprays for the microphone, piano, and keyboards.
6. All ward members and cleaning crew from the previous meetings (except for a few individuals, such as the Bishopric, organist, and missionaries) should exit the building before ushers allow members to enter for the next meeting.

Members at Increased Risk

The following paragraph comes directly from the stake presidency's guidelines for returning to in-person worship services:

Out of an abundance of caution, high-risk individuals (those 65 years and older and those with underlying medical conditions like diabetes, chronic lung disease, chronic heart disease, those taking medications intended to suppress the immune system, those with immune deficient disease, etc.) are encouraged **not** to attend in-person sacrament meetings at this particular time. The best practice is to provide the Sacrament to them, in a safe manner, in their homes. Ward leaders, ministering sisters, and ministering brothers need to pay special attention to those individuals to help them feel loved and included. If a high-risk individual does attend sacrament meeting, they should feel welcomed, but every precaution should be made in where and how they participate. Because circumstances and health challenges vary by individual and family, ward leaders are to help members not feel compelled to attend meetings but feel loved and supported should they choose not to participate for a time. We look forward to the day when we can all meet together as a ward family.

Additional Comments and Counsel

We invite any ward members with questions or concerns regarding the Phase 1 return to in-person worship services to contact a member of the Bishopric or the Elders Quorum or Relief Society presidents. We counsel ward members to use caution and their best judgment when making decisions about in-person worship services. We ask that you counsel with the Lord through prayer to receive specific direction as to decisions regarding safety and whether or not to join in-person worship services during Phase 1. We again ask that all those who choose-to-participate follow the guidelines that we have provided. The Bishopric will regularly evaluate our meetings and consider adjustments we may need to make as we proceed through Phase 1.