



Guidelines
Reopening of our Churches
Effective as of May 15, 2020



Table Of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| I. Introduction | 3 |
| II. General Guidelines as They Apply to Churches and Religious Facilities | 3 |
| A. How COVID 19 Spreads | 3 |
| B. General Precautions..... | 4 |
| III. Pandemic Recovery Planning | 4 |
| A. Establish an Assessment & Recovery Team | 4 |
| B. Communications Plan | 5 |
| C. Contingency Plans | 5 |
| IV. Prior to Opening the Church | 5 |
| A. Cleaning, Disinfecting & Protective Equipment | 6 |
| B. Determining Occupancy, Access, Circulation, and Egress..... | 6 |
| V. Resuming Religious Services | 7 |
| A. Vulnerable Individuals Who Should be Advised to Remain at Home | 7 |
| B. Entering the Church | 7 |
| Temperature Checks | 7 |
| D. Entering the Narthex | 8 |
| E. Entering the Nave..... | 8 |
| F. . Departing the Church after Holy Communion | 9 |
| Other Sacraments | 9 |
| H. Rest Rooms | 9 |
| I. Following Each service | 9 |
| Appendix A | 10 |
| Appendix B | 12 |
| Appendix C | 13 |
| References..... | 14 |



Guidelines

Reopening of our Churches

Effective as of May 15, 2020

I. Introduction

These guidelines address the basic issues regarding the resumption of in-person services at our churches as we progress through the COVID-19 pandemic. It is probable that a complete reopening of church buildings for liturgical, educational, and social gatherings may not be possible for some time, and even then, the expected lingering effects will require adherence to certain guidelines and procedures.

These guidelines are based upon a compilation of information contained in several documents published by the U.S. Government as well as other published resources that address the management of the effects of COVID-10. It serves as a guide, suggesting best practices to be used when planning the reopening of our Churches. Because of the aggressive nature of the virus, and the unprecedented challenge this crisis presents, planning may require a rethinking of the traditional ways that Church services are conducted, if we are to protect all of our constituents in the best way possible. Please note that these guidelines do not supplant or replace federal, state, or local directives regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. You must always comply with applicable law.

II. General Guidelines as They Apply to Churches and Religious Facilities

A. How COVID-19 Spreads

- 1) Spread very easily and sustainably between people in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet)
- 2) Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks, that can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or be inhaled into the lungs
- 3) May be spread by people who are not showing symptoms

B. General Precautions

For States and regions that satisfy the criteria listed as follows:

- 1) All particularly vulnerable individuals (Elderly; households with elderly residents; individuals with underlying health conditions, etc.) should remain at home
- 2) Precautions should be taken to isolate others from vulnerable individuals
- 3) Social distancing is in place; all persons who are out of residence should remain at a minimum of 6 ft distances from one another

- 4) Socializing in groups, including holding religious services should be limited to applicable limitations.
- 5) Schools and organized youth activities remain closed.
- 6) No choirs or altar boys.
- 7) Protective masks and gloves are recommended, and in some local jurisdictions, mandated

III. Pandemic Recovery Planning

A. Establish an Assessment & Recovery Team

- 1) Anticipating the number of clergy, laity and parishioners who would be attending services, select the required number (Including alternates) of staff to assist in implementing the safety plan during services. The team should typically consist of the priest, parish council officer, and other parishioners as required. Membership should remain consistent.
- 2) A single point of contact should be designated for conducting the research required for the developing the plan, and for maintaining the plan to ensure that it contains the latest available guidance from authorities
- 3) Contacts and lines of communication should be established with local health and other government officials, medical and emergency resources and facilities, key suppliers and vendors required to support the plan and any envisioned contingency
- 4) An initial assessment should be accomplished, considering all of the protocols and procedures outlined in sections II, IV, and V of this Directive
- 5) Continually monitor that team members (through observation and discussion with members) have been COVID-19 symptom free for at least 14 days before participating during services

B. Communications Plan

- 1) Procedures should be developed for ongoing communications with parishioners and other stakeholders regarding plans and procedures in preparation for, and after reopening**
- 2) To help ensure consistency of operations, each member of the recovery team should be provided with a checklist of the actions to be performed by the team**
- 3) Procedures should be established for the emergency dissemination of information**

C. Contingency Plans

- 1) Procedures should be established to monitor Federal and local reopening schedules and guidelines
- 2) Recovery team members should become familiar with the symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, etc.)
- 3) Develop surveillance strategies and procedures for recognizing and addressing people who display symptoms both before entering the Church and after they have entered
- 4) Develop procedures for implementing additional sanitization and safety measures should a person display after entering the Church
- 5) Create contingency plans to address the impact of potential resurgence of disease after reopening**
- 6) Create contingency plan to address disruption in vendor-performed critical services after reopening of sites; develop list of qualified service providers for any such critical services; develop procedures for performing services**
- 7) Designate a single location for receipt of deliveries**

IV. Prior to Opening the Church

A. Cleaning, Disinfecting & Protective Equipment

- 1) Determine all areas that require cleaning and disinfecting in the Church, event areas, restrooms, hallways, offices, etc.; develop a checklist for site-specific protocols and procedures, particularly frequently touched surfaces and areas requiring more hygienic attention such as counters, door knobs, bannisters, electrical switches, etc.
- 2) Identify which supplies will be needed, and establish an inventory based on projected occupancy. Whenever possible, ensure that supplies are disposable after each use, and provide separate waste bins for that disposal
- 3) Cleaning staff should review and be trained on general cleaning, site-specific protocols, and procedures
- 4) Acquire and issue sufficient numbers of protective equipment (mask & gloves) and develop procedures for sanitary disposal after use

- 5) Prior to initiating cleaning tasks, ensure all staff practice hand hygiene, washing hands thoroughly prior to putting on Personal Protection Equipment (PPE)
- 6) Fabric upholstery in classrooms, crying/waiting rooms should be replaced or covered with plastic for easier cleaning
- 7) Ensure a safety data sheet is available for all PPE equipment, chemicals and requirements for safe use are followed
- 8) Treat all surfaces using disinfectants from government approved or authorized lists ensuring all chemical limits of effectiveness are adhered to
- 9) After use and before leaving the premises, workers should properly dispose of or sanitize PPE. If they are to be reused, they should be sanitized and secured in plastic bags, in an area free of contamination. If they are to be disposed of, they should first be placed plastic bags, sealed, and then placed into a general waste container. After use of any PPE equipment, hands must be washed and sanitized.
- 10) For larger scale cleaning and disinfecting such as for pews, floors, doors, etc. a licensed, commercial contractor should be hired
- 11) Hand sanitizers should be installed in all access, egress, and common areas

B. Determining Occupancy, Access, Circulation, and Egress

- 1) Rules for social distancing (six feet in any direction between persons) must guide the calculation for occupancy for both seated and standing individuals
- 2) In churches with pews, calculations should be made by determining lineage footage between those to be seated, in concert with the distance in front and in back of each pew
- 3) Once calculated, each seating space should be marked
- 4) Calculations should also be made for access to and seating in classrooms, crying/waiting rooms, etc., limiting occupancy where required
- 5) Social distancing must also be enforced for access into, and occupancy of restrooms
- 6) Elevator use should be minimized, and social distancing should be strictly enforced for both occupancy and waiting passengers
- 7) All access into the church, pedestrian circulation within the church. e.g. during Holy Communion, distribution of Antidoron, etc., and egress out of the church should be one-way directional, thereby avoiding grouping or crowding
- 8) Wherever possible, doors should remain in the open position
- 9) Common areas such as the narthex and hallways should be equipped with stanchions that facilitate pedestrian circulation
- 10) Event areas should be equipped with stanchions that facilitate pedestrian circulation and furniture arranged to facilitate social distancing; occupancy limited when required
- 11) Non-essential doors should be secured
- 12) Access to specific areas such as behind candle stands, offices, etc. should be restricted to clergy and staff
- 13) All religious service books and any other materials should be removed from pews

V. Resuming Religious Services

- 1) All guidance listed under Section IV (Prior to Opening the Church) of this Directive must be implemented *prior to and after every service*, as needed

A. Vulnerable Individuals Who Should be Advised to Remain Home

- 1) Clergy, with the blessing of their Metropolis, and faithful who do not feel safe participating in services or attending them
- 2) Particularly vulnerable individuals (Elderly; individuals with underlying health conditions, etc.)
- 3) Small children who cannot remain close to a parent during services
- 4) Anyone who presently has COVID-19 and has not recovered, or presents symptoms, or has tested positive for the virus
- 5) Anyone who lives with or cares for someone who is currently sick, has not yet recovered, presents symptoms, or has tested positive
- 6) In all of the above referenced circumstances, priests should find safe ways to offer pastoral care, or seek to provide opportunities for the faithful to visit the church

B. Entering the Church

- 1) Signage should be posted on approaches to church entrances, and provide the following verbiage (See Appendix A):
 - a. For your protection, our church is following government laws & recommended protocols
 - b. Occupancy in the church is limited to **X** persons
 - c. Social distancing is being practiced
 - d. Protective masks are required, gloves are optional
 - e. Please follow the directions of the ushers at all times
- 2) Ushers equipped with protective facemasks and gloves should be positioned outside the main entrance to assist when needed

Temperature Checks

Although it is hoped that parishioners waiting to enter church have self-monitored themselves and their families, and believe they are free of the COVID-19 virus, if possible, each parishioner should be checked for a high fever (100.4 degrees F (38 C) or higher) before entering.

Because of the current public health emergency, the FDA has approved guidance for easy-to-use telethermographic devices (allowed for use by non-medical persons) for taking a person's temperature. Non-invasive, non-contact devices of this kind are widely available, and are used by holding over the middle of an individual's forehead. A church staff member should be assigned this task.

It is recommended that a local health care professional or pharmacist be consulted on the use and purchase of the device.

C. Entering the Narthex

- 1) All ushers serving in the Narthex should be equipped with protective facemasks and gloves
- 2) Standard candles to be lit by parishioners should be handed to the parishioner by ushers
- 3) Votives requested by parishioners should be brought into the Nave and lighted by ushers
- 4) Money/envelopes from the purchase of candles or any other donation should be placed in a single cash box or receptacle and sanitized after counting and before secured for deposit
- 5) Icons and the Gospel should be venerated without making any physical contact; signage should be placed in these areas (See Appendix B)
- 6) Crying/waiting rooms should be secured and opened only upon request for special needs parishioners
- 7) Sanitizers will be available
- 8) Doors into the Nave will remain open and be designated as entrance or exit and enforced by ushers
- 9) Ushers will immediately sanitize any icon, gospel, door handle or surface touched by a parishioner
- 10) If it is learned that someone is sick, shows symptoms, or lives or cares for someone who is sick comes to church, they should be asked to leave. It will be necessary to sanitize the areas they occupied as soon as they are asked to depart, and clergy, ushers or parishioners who were present near the individual should be asked to self-quarantine for a minimum of 14 days before returning to church

D. Entering the Nave

- 1) The group of cantors and others assisting the priest should remain the same
- 2) If clergy, servers or their families are sick in any way, those individuals should not participate in services
- 3) All ushers serving in the Nave should be equipped with protective facemasks and gloves

- 4) Everyone must wear facemasks in accordance with government laws and recommended protocols
- 5) Ushers should be positioned just inside the entrance and exit doors, and direct parishioners to use the single direction aisles leading to their seats
- 6) Social distancing seating, pre-marked on the pews should be enforced by ushers

E. Departing the Church after Holy Communion

- 1) Collection baskets should not be passed to parishioners. They should be placed on stands or tables so parishioners can contribute as they leave the church
- 2) All money/envelope collections should be handled only by properly equipped ushers, and after collection be placed in a single cash box or receptacle and sanitized after counting and before secured for deposit
- 3) Collection baskets should be sanitized after each service
- 4) For parishioners who have not received Antidoron after receiving Holy Communion, it will be offered to them as they depart the church; individually wrapped in plastic/ small plastic bags, and handed to them by an usher

F. Other Sacraments

- 1) For services for all other sacraments, all of the participants should follow the protocols and procedures outlined in Sections V, D, E, and F of these guidelines
- 2) For sacraments requiring the use of private areas such as dressing rooms for Christenings, waiting rooms for weddings and funerals, etc., these areas should be cleaned and sanitized before and after each use
- 3) All doors handles, seating, accessible surfaces, icons, telephones, flooring etc. should be included in the process

G. Rest Rooms

- 1) Social distancing procedures should be applied regardless of the numbers of persons allowed in during use or queuing for use
- 2) In addition to hand soap, restrooms should be equipped with sanitizers and sanitizing wipes
- 3) Signage should be posted requesting that each user properly wash hands, and follow it by wiping all touched surfaces with sanitize wipes (See Appendix C)
- 4) Ushers should be monitoring the use of rest rooms to ensure that they are properly supplied and maintained

H. Following Each Service

- 1) Following every service, all rooms and locations should be cleaned and sanitized as per the procedures outlined in Section IV, A of this Directive

(Add Logo Here)

For your protection, our Church is following government laws & recommended protocols



Occupancy in the Church is limited to X persons (*the number authorized by local authorities*)



We are practicing social distancing



Protective masks are required; protective gloves are optional



Sanitizers are available



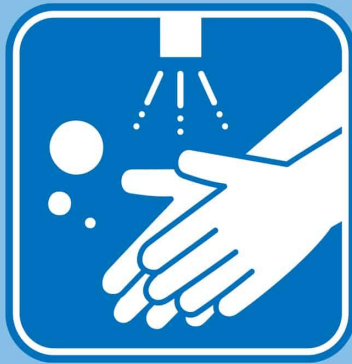
Please follow the directions of the ushers at all times

By voluntarily entering this church facility, you affirm that you are not currently ill or experiencing COVID-19 symptoms; you acknowledge that while safety measures are being taken by the church, it cannot guarantee the safety of every person present, particularly those persons who are above 65 or who have underlying health conditions; you agree to abide by the social distancing and safety guidelines being practiced in this church; you consent to hold the church harmless against any damages or claims regarding your voluntary presence. If you are not able to agree to and affirm the above statements, you may not participate in this worship service in person and may choose to join online.

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX C

Please venerate without physical contact



FRIENDLY REMINDER

REMEMBER TO WASH YOUR HANDS
FOR AT LEAST 20 SECONDS



FRIENDLY REMINDER



APPLY THE PRODUCT ON
THE PALM OF ONE HAND



RUB HANDS TOGETHER



COVER ALL SURFACES
UNTIL HANDS FEEL DRY
(20 SEC)

References

- Center for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), “Corona Disease 2019 (COVID-19); How COVID-19 Spreads”. Content Source: National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD); last reviewed: April 13, 2020. www.cdc.gov
- CDC, “Guidelines: Opening Up America Again”. www.cdc.gov
- CDC, “Corona Disease 2019 (COVID-19); Interim Guidance for Administrators and Leaders of Community and Faith-Based Organizations to Plan, Prepare, and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)”. Content Source: National Center for Immunizations and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD), Division of Viral Diseases; last reviewed: March 23, 2020. www.cdc.gov
- The Partnership Center, Center for Faith and Opportunity Initiatives, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, “COVID-19: Recommended Preventative Practices and FAQs for Faith-based and Community Leaders”. www.hhs.gov
- CDC, “Corona Disease 2019 (COVID-19); Checklist for Community and Faith Leaders”. Content Source: National center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD), Division of Viral Diseases; last reviewed: March 6, 2020. www.cdc.gov
- Cushman & Wakefield, “Recovery Readiness, A How-To Guide for Reopening Your Workplace, Version 1.0)”. © 2020 Cushman & Wakefield. All Rights Reserved. www.cushmanwakefield.com
- The Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America, “Synodal Directives, Towards a Reopening of our Churches”, Effective May 1, 2020. www.oca.org
- CDC, “FAQs for Event Organizers & Individuals”. April 7, 2020. www.cdc.gov
- CDC, “Interim Guidance: Get Your Mass Gatherings or Large Community Events Ready for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)”. April 5, 2020. www.cdc.gov
- CDC, “Implementation of Mitigation Strategies for Communities with Local COVID-19 Transmission”. March 12, 2020. www.cdc.gov
- CDC, “Cleaning And Disinfecting Your Facility”. April 1, 2020. www.cdc.gov
- Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America, “Risk Reducing Measures Specific to Orthodox Services”. www.assemblyofbishops.org
- Food and Drug Administration (FDA), FDA Guidance, “FDA greenlights telethermographic systems’ use for COVID-19 triage”. April 17, 2020. www.fda.gov

- FDA, “Non-Contact temperature Measurement Devices: Considerations for Use in Port of Entry Screening Activities”. 22 August, 2014. www.fda.gov
- FDA, “Enforcement Policy for Telethermographic Systems During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Public Health Emergency; Guidance for Industry and Food and Drug Administration Staff”. April 2020. www.fda.gov
- CDC, “Definitions of Symptoms for Reportable Illnesses”. Content Source: CDC; National center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases (NCEZID); last reviewed June 30, 2017