

**Report and Recommendations from the Task Force for  
Re-entering, Re-opening, and Re-imagining for the  
Diocese of New Jersey**

**June 4, 2020**

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## Introduction

Our church buildings are meant to be places where the Body of Christ is strengthened by community, by shared worship, and by the sacraments to serve as Christ's hands and feet in the world. While the SARS-CoV-2/COVID-19 pandemic necessarily limits how we may be together without endangering others, it is time for us to begin to use our buildings and physical resources again for that purpose.

We have longed to be together in this time of loss, distress, and change. We have refrained from gathering out of love and care for one another and for God's people around us. Now, as health conditions in our surrounding communities permit, we may begin to gather in-person again.

The guidelines prepared by the Reentering, Reopening, and Reimagining (RRR) Task Force are meant to help congregations prepare to use our physical spaces and physical gatherings in ways that care for the health and safety of all God's people.

Both science and the Gospel speak clearly of the understanding that what affects the health and well-being of one of us, especially the marginalized and at-risk among us, affects the health and wholeness of us all. Jesus regularly teaches his disciples that "what you have done for the least of these, you have done for me." Paul encourages the strongest in faith to use our freedom in Christ to care for the limits and needs of those whose faith or connection to the Body of Christ is at risk. (*Matthew 25:40, 45; Romans 14:14-21; 1 Corinthians 8:9*)

This phased re-entry plan will include important limits on physical gatherings and on the use of our buildings at each stage in order to preserve the health of all. Even when one of these limits poses challenges for our particular congregation or ministry, it is an act of Christ's care and love for the whole human race, and for our neighbors in the Diocese and in the world, to conform to that limit for this time.

The Stages in this document refer to the Stages laid out by the Governor of New Jersey. Links to resources used for guidance in creating this document can be found in Appendix A. The Diocese will move from stage to stage at the direction of the Bishop, but will not move to a higher stage than that declared for the whole State of New Jersey.

As the Diocese and State move from one stage to the next, any congregation or ministry may at any time conform to the standards or recommendations for an earlier stage. No congregation or ministry may move independently to any activity permitted in a stage beyond the stage of the Diocese as a whole without explicit permission of the Bishop.

## **Viral Transmission and Infection Information**

Health is more than just the absence of disease; it is a state of complete spiritual, physical, mental, and social well-being. Hence in all phases it is important to: exercise regularly, eat sensibly, sleep sufficiently, and grow as a Christian.

SAR-CoV-2/COVID-19 is thought to spread mainly through close contact from person-to-person. Some people without symptoms may be able to spread the virus. We are still learning about how the virus spreads and the severity of illness it causes. The virus SAR-CoV-2 that causes COVID-19 is spreading very easily and sustainably between people. Information from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic suggests that this virus is spreading more efficiently than influenza, but not as efficiently as measles, which is highly contagious. The virus can apparently survive up to 5 days on glass and stainless steel, though this is an unlikely mode of transmission.

For all phases, concerns about co-infection are addressed within the essence of the following recommendations. It is, however, true that with any viral illness that is transmitted by respiratory droplets or exposure, superimposed bacterial pneumonia is an additional concern that is best addressed by everyone being up to date on the recommended vaccinations for their age group, but particularly the pneumococcal and flu vaccines.

In trying to determine what Stage your local area may be in, please feel free to inquire of the Diocesan Reentering, Reopening, and Reimagining Team and the local Health Department.

Before developing your plan for re-entry and re-gathering, please assess whether your congregation is ready to return to in-person worship under the limits in this document. A sample congregational survey to measure interest in returning to in-person worship is available in Appendix B.

## **General Guidelines**

### **(applicable to all stages)**

Congregational leaders should become familiar with the information and resources at the State of New Jersey Coronavirus information hub: <https://covid19.nj.gov/index.html>. Congregational leaders should check regularly for updates that may apply to churches and guidelines for retail, education, and food service establishments that may apply to ministries such as thrift shops, clothing banks, schools, and feeding programs.

#### **Allowable number of persons in church**

We anticipate that state and municipal authorities will continue to limit the number of people gathered in church buildings or other non-business groups through all stages of this plan. Every parish must abide by the limits set by the State of New Jersey or applicable local authorities. Within those limits, you may calculate the maximum number of attendees that your church space can safely accommodate by marking 6-foot distances between groups living in the same household (do not forget distances needed for leaders of worship and movement in the building). At every stage, the LOWER number (of state regulation or of distanced-occupancy) will govern the maximum number of persons who may be in any worship service or other gathering in the Diocese of New Jersey.

Information on attendance limits for houses of worship may be found in the NJ COVID-19 Information Hub: <https://covid19.nj.gov/faqs/nj-information/general-public/are-churches-and-other-houses-of-worship-still-offering-services>

All parishes will need to determine an equitable system to limit attendance, such as advance registration or some other process. No more than the maximum number of people allowed by these guidelines may be seated at any service, for any reason. Congregations should have a plan in place for how to respond if unexpected attendees arrive. Ushers or other designated leaders will be prepared to invite anyone above the maximum to plan to return for another service or join in online worship.

Congregations might consider developing a “ministry of substitution” in which some members attending services or gatherings are prepared to exercise hospitality by stepping out of a gathering so a visitor or newcomer may come in.

Ushers, greeters and church leaders should be trained on how to manage the protocols. Consider preparing scripts to help ushers manage potentially difficult interactions (i.e. someone who violates space or refuses to wear a mask.)

## **Spacing**

Unless otherwise specified (e.g. in guidance about communion or other sacraments), all persons inside church buildings or at any organized gatherings outdoors on church grounds, must maintain 6-foot physical distance from any persons outside of their own household at all times.

## **Masks**

Where the wearing of masks is required or recommended in this document, the expectation is that we will be following the guidance of the State of New Jersey on who should be wearing masks. For example, at the time of this writing, infants and children under 2 years of age are exempt from mask requirements, as are people who are incapacitated, unconscious, having trouble breathing, or are not able to remove their own mask without assistance. Unless otherwise specified, masks referred to in this document are at a minimum non-medical-grade cloth or disposable face coverings. Masks should cover both nose and mouth, and fit snugly to the sides of the face.

## **Communication**

Clear communication to the congregation, neighbors, tenants, and guests is essential at all stages of re-entering our buildings. Communicate using multiple oral, written and pictorial methods of communication.

It is important to make clear:

- what physical distancing and mask requirements are in effect
- what contact tracing will require of people who enter your buildings
- what cleaning procedures are being followed and how congregation members and guests can help
- how attendance and overflow will be managed for any gathering

## **Church employees and volunteers**

As long as gathering restrictions are in place, employees and volunteers should work from home whenever possible, rather than in shared office spaces. We recognize that there are essential functions that cannot be performed outside of church buildings. Schedules for employees and volunteers whose work requires them to be in the church buildings should be planned to minimize contact between persons of different households.

**Any employee or volunteer experiencing symptoms of illness should stay at home. If their function is essential and cannot be performed from home, a substitute must be found.**

## **Congregational Participation**

All persons exhibiting symptoms of illness are strongly urged to stay home. Congregations should reinforce this advice in every communication about any gathering, ministry or church-related work to be undertaken during the stages of re-opening.

A primary goal of these guidelines, and a principle that all congregations and individuals in this Diocese should apply when making a choice among actions or plans, is to limit contacts between households, or use of enclosed spaces, as much as possible while continuing the ministry of the church.

This means that if gathering for in-person worship (or increasing the number of persons present in worship) is a risk to the health of the congregational leaders or clergy, or to a significant portion of the congregation, this Task Force advises that the congregation NOT re-gather until the risk subsides.

## **Individual comfort levels**

All requirements and recommendations listed in this guidance are sufficient to minimize SARS-CoV-2/COVID-19 transmission to generally acceptable and safe levels. However, it should be remembered that safe does not mean zero risk. It is therefore important to consider how best to accommodate anyone who is still concerned about disease transmission. Higher risk persons, such as those with asthma, people who are immunocompromised, older adults, and people with liver disease, should be encouraged to remain sheltered and attend services remotely.

## **Equitable access to worship, sacraments, and fellowship**

We strongly recommend that congregations and ministries of this Diocese continue to offer other non-physical gatherings and aids (e.g. online, telephone, mailed packets) for worship, study, and fellowship throughout all numbered stages of re-entering and re-gathering. Many members of our congregations – as well as those beyond our congregations who need the opportunity to worship and hear the gospel – will not be able to risk attending in-person gatherings.

Those planning re-entry to the buildings for ministries and in-person worship gatherings must consider how to avoid creating a situation where access to the worship or sacraments of the church is unequally distributed between those with the health and privilege to easily attend limited in-person gatherings and those who for reasons of health, work or other risks cannot easily attend limited in-person gatherings (e.g., if you are offering communion to 25% of your congregation who can attend an in-person service, consider how communion can be shared with the 75% percent unable to attend).



Each congregation will need to make their own determination about the best way to offer worship equity for their context. Elements to consider in making these decisions include: (a) how to manage limited attendance so that all those in the congregation ready to worship in-person may do so regularly; (b) whether expanded home communion visits are both practical and safe in your community; (c) and what liturgical options allow for most equal experience among those gathered in-person and those attending virtually.

### **Theological Notes**

All of us in this Diocese are longing to return to the material sacramental life of the church. However, while flexibility and creativity are needed in this time, it is important to remember that these restrictions are temporary. A crisis is not the occasion to experiment with theological and ecclesiological innovations that take us outside the bounds of our tradition and the canons of the church. Eucharistic practices must conform to the rubrics, doctrine, and discipline of the Episcopal Church and the Diocese of New Jersey. All that we do should be governed by several principles. First, the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist and the real presence of the gathered community to each other are two sides of the same coin. Second, the Eucharist is not a commodity to be consumed, especially not in ways that reinforce the individualized atomization of our culture.

This would exclude ideas such as, but not limited to:

- Encouraging parishioners to bring their own bread and hold it up at the time of consecration
- Pre-consecrating hosts and placing them in the pews
- Drive-by, drive-in and 'cyber-consecration' services
- Bringing communion back to another location to share with family and friends

### **Use of buildings by outside groups**

All outside groups using the buildings of congregations and ministries in the Diocese of New Jersey must follow distancing, masking, contact tracing, and cleaning requirements set forth in this document for the congregations and ministries of the Diocese. As an example, a tenant using a kitchen must comply with cleaning requirements and any applicable food preparation and service guidance from state and local authorities, including wearing masks and maintaining 6-foot distancing while in church buildings.

Ensure that you have a signed agreement for the use of space for any group using church premises which should include the leader's current contact information. Update each agreement with the applicable spacing/distancing, masking, cleaning, and contact tracing requirements before groups use or resume use of your congregation's space.

Each congregation will have to determine how to ensure cleaning of church spaces after use by outside groups.

### **Thrift shops, schools, and other “businesses” of the congregation**

Retail, educational, food service or ministries of the congregation should follow guidelines from the State of New Jersey and county or municipal authorities applicable to the type of business they would be if independent of the church (e.g. thrift shops should follow retail guidelines).

Schools and preschools may wish to join the New Jersey Association for the Education of Young Children (<https://njaeyc.org/>) for access to their shared resources ([njsharedresources.org](http://njsharedresources.org)) which help distill and apply state and national guidance.

Guidance for New Jersey Child Care Facilities on COVID-19 Related Health and Safety Requirements published on 5/29/20 can be accessed here:

<https://www.nj.gov/dcf/news/Final.CC.Health.and.Safety.Standards.pdf>

When civil and Diocesan guidelines conflict, the more restrictive guideline should be followed, out of an abundance of care for the vulnerable.

### **Legal & Insurance Considerations**

- Record attendance at all meetings, including regular attendees and visitors. Consider the need for all information that would be necessary for contact tracing, while remaining sensitive to privacy concerns. (Information to be gathered includes: Name, address, phone number, email, date and time of visit).
- While only healthcare providers and labs are required to report specific communicable diseases, because it is based on a definite healthcare provider diagnosis, it is always a good idea for a church member to communicate concerns and possible exposures to the local health department. A list of local health departments may be found here: <https://nj.gov/health/lh/documents/LocalHealthDirectory.pdf>.
- Ensure that any outside group using the building has a robust written contact tracing plan suitable to their group dynamics to receive and share the information if someone in the group, congregation, or other group sharing the congregation’s space, contracts COVID-19
- Assign responsibility to a single congregational leader (with a backup also assigned), for communicating to the congregation and the Diocese any known cases of COVID-19.
- Assign oversight of compliance with COVID-19 protocols among other users of church spaces, e.g. homeless shelters, thrift shops, twelve-step groups, feeding programs. This should include:
  - Update Building Use Agreements to include COVID-19 protocols.

- Get up to date insurance certificates from all outside users.
- Establish a system to ensure contact tracing information is current for all outside users.
- Congregations should examine their insurance policies and should consult with their insurance provider for any exclusions related to communicable diseases.
  - Congregations should also examine their insurance policies and should consult with their insurance provider with respect to off-site ministries, such as thrift shops, cemeteries, etc.
  - It is strongly recommended that congregations be named as additional insured on the insurance policy of any outside group using their building.
  - Be mindful that fundraisers open to the public (e.g. spaghetti dinners, church fairs. Pancakes suppers) may fall outside of charitable immunity protections and may increase legal exposure.
- Prohibit sick employees and volunteers from coming to the premises.

## Cleaning and Disinfecting

As a general principle, all spaces used in church buildings should undergo cleaning before the next use. This may be as simple as wiping down shared surfaces when an individual leaves the church office and before the next person comes in. This may require cleaning an entire sanctuary, kitchen, or meeting space after use by one group before any other group may use the same space.

In compliance with CDC, usage **cleaning** refers to the removal of dust, dirt and oil and is normally accomplished using water with detergents or soap. Cleaning reduces but usually does not destroy most or all bacteria, viruses or other organisms.

**Disinfecting** destroys bacteria, viruses or other organisms that cause infection. Disinfection does not kill all bacteria, viruses or other organisms on a surface or in a material. Disinfectants have a recommended time that they have to be in contact with the surface or material in order to work.

**Sterilization** is the killing of all bacteria, viruses and others organisms on a surface or in a material.

**Sanitizing** is a confusing term that has different definitions from different groups and will not be used in this document.

Clean = free of dirt, dust and oil

Disinfected = free of disease-causing bacteria, viruses and other organisms

Sterilized = free of all living organisms

### Cleaning and disinfecting procedures

- Wear disposable gloves to clean and disinfect.
- Clean surfaces using soap, a detergent and water, then use a disinfectant.
- High touch surfaces include
  - Tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, sinks, should have disposable wipes nearby so they may be cleaned after each use.
- Spaces that have been entirely unused for seven days or more do not require disinfecting, only routine cleaning.

Suggested disinfectants and their contact times are:

- Lysol® Neutra Air® 2 in 1 (30 seconds)
- Lysol® Brand All Purpose Cleaner ( 2 minutes )
- Clorox® Clean-Up® Disinfectant Cleaner with Bleach (30 seconds) .

## Sextons and church cleaners

- All sextons and anyone concerned with the routine maintenance and cleaning of the facilities should be consulted about their comfort in performing their tasks and what additional resources they might need.
- Information provided in this section should be provided to all cleaners.
- The church should have disposable nitrile gloves available for use by those involved in cleaning.
- It is highly recommended that printed health materials be placed in areas such as bathrooms and the church vestibule. See Appendix D for samples and a link to printable resources.

This task force recognizes that the costs of cleaning and disinfecting may make opening the church for regular gatherings financially unsustainable for some congregations. Diocesan staff have been asked to investigate the possibility of shared-purchase agreements with professional cleaning firms and other ways to mitigate costs. It is entirely appropriate for congregations to limit their activities in the building to those for which appropriate cleaning and disinfecting, following guidelines in this document and appendices, can be done by volunteers. These guidelines do NOT require congregations to hire professional cleaners.

Additional information, including a one-page bullet-point sheet on cleaning and disinfection from the CDC, is available in Appendix C.

## Stage 0 – “Maximum Restrictions” recommendations

During this stage it is anticipated that no persons will be in buildings in the Diocese except for individuals who have critical tasks that must be performed on location.

It is important to properly maintain “closed” buildings in order to stave off problems from organisms such as Legionella and mold so while in this Stage, the following areas will still need attention.

### Water systems

Hot water systems must be maintained at temperatures of 60 degrees centigrade or 140 degrees Fahrenheit or more; cold water systems must be maintained at 20 degrees centigrade or 68 degrees Fahrenheit or less. These are normal standards for bacteria control. Faucets must be allowed to run for 10 minutes and toilets be flushed at least once every 72 hours.

Additional detailed information can be found here: [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/building-water-system.html?deliveryName=USCDC\\_248\\_DM25447](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/building-water-system.html?deliveryName=USCDC_248_DM25447)

### AC/HVAC

The EPA has endorsed the position of the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) on how to maintain AC/HVAC systems in a way to minimize the transmission of SARS-CoV-2, the virus which causes the disease COVID-19. A link to those procedures can be found here <https://www.ashrae.org/technical-resources/resources> and should be followed. In short, if your building’s AC/HVAC system has been routinely maintained and running you should have little to do. However, if your building, including your HVAC system, has been completely closed down for more than a week or if there are any questions about the integrity of your AC/HVAC system and its maintenance you need to consult an HVAC professional before reopening. If you need to call an HVAC professional, request these services:

1. Assessment for mold and excess humidity
2. Maintenance of indoor humidity below 50% as measured by a hygrometer
3. A 72 hour “flush out” period before occupants return
4. Three weekly checks after opening to insure operating efficiency

## **Cleaning between usage**

The CDC has published detailed advice about cleaning and disinfecting procedures <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html> and those procedures should be followed.

All pews, door handles, faucet handles, light switches, elevator buttons and other commonly touched surfaces must be cleaned with disinfectants after each use or at a minimum daily. Pews should be disinfected with disinfectant towelettes (e.g. Discide Ultra Disinfecting Towelettes, Super Large Wipe Sani-cloth by PDI) after each use.

All door handles, faucet handles, light switches, elevator buttons and other commonly touched surfaces must be cleaned with disinfectants daily or after each use.

Restrooms must be kept available and cleaned at any time that people are in the building for essential work and cleaned after every use. (This may be done by the individual using the restroom if cleaning wipes are provided and instructions are posted.)

Offices and all common areas must be clean and disinfected between any uses. This includes door handles, counters, printers, copiers, telephones, etc. Areas unoccupied for 7 or more days need only routine cleaning. Maintain existing cleaning practices for outdoor areas.

Those involved in cleaning should wear disposable gloves and masks for all tasks in the cleaning process, including handling trash.

Refer to cleaning procedures outlined above and in Appendix C for more detail.

## Stage One recommendations

During Stage One all meetings or gatherings in buildings in the Diocese will be limited to the maximum number of persons allowed to gather under current state regulations while still maintaining 6-foot social distancing. **Please refer to guidance on allowable number of people in General Guidelines above.**

### **AC/HVAC**

Recommendations from Stage 0 must continue to be followed.

### **Cleaning**

Recommendations from Stage 0 must continue to be followed although cleaning may occur between services or gatherings rather than after each use during this stage

In addition to the guidance in Stage 0, it is recommended that all books be removed from pews. Utilizing either overhead screens or single-use handouts will minimize touching of church literature.

Individuals and families may also be encouraged to bring and use their own personal Book of Common Prayer. Congregations are asked to facilitate each household having their own Book of Common Prayer for use at home and personal devotion. Changes in our worship as a gathered church may provide an opportunity for deeper formation in the prayer of the church.

### **Worship**

If your congregation is not officially open to in-person worship, the maximum number of people who may gather to record or stream worship in church buildings is 10, including both “on-camera” and “off-camera” individuals, regardless of any higher limit in place for indoor gatherings in the State of New Jersey.

Clergy and lay leaders who are considered high-risk are encouraged to continue to record or stream worship from their homes rather than gathering with others in church buildings. Full-Time or Part-Time Clergy who are considered “highly vulnerable” or in the “high risk” category and therefore subject to a greater chance of contracting COVID19 and feel, as a result, they cannot resume in-person duties, should contact the Bishop to discuss their situation.



### **In-person worship requires adherence to the following guidelines:**

- A maximum of 10 people indoors is currently allowed in NJ (6/2/20). When state maximums increase, the number of people in worship may increase.
- Physical distancing of at least 6 feet must be maintained at all times between each person not in the same household. This applies to everyone leading worship as well as all other attendees.
- Pews should be marked at 6-foot intervals to facilitate social distancing.
- Masks must be available and worn by officiants, ushers, acolytes, and musicians; congregation members must also wear masks.
- Anyone involved in preparing the altar should wear masks and gloves.
- Preaching and reading of scripture and prayers must be done from a location (lectern or similar) that is placed at least 20 feet from the rest of the congregation. Microphones touched by anyone should not be shared between readers/leaders without being disinfected. All handled equipment will need to be disinfected before and after services, and any microphones used should be disinfected after each service because of possible droplet contamination.
- Masks can be removed for speaking during the service if the individual is 20 feet away from any other person.
- The altar party should be as minimal as practicable and also maintain 6-foot distance.
- No Vestments may be shared between lay ministers or clergy unless a week has elapsed between wearings. Vestments should be handled only by the person wearing them, unless several days elapse.
- Hangings, linens, and appointments should be handled by only one person within a 48 hour period. Altar guild and clergy should work out procedures for preparation, clearing, and re-setting of the altar to conform to this necessity.
- Communion, when it is restarted, will be distributed in one kind only (bread) with distancing and masking procedures as outlined in Procedures for Communion below.
- One singer/cantor is permitted, but must be 30 feet away from any other person. Instrumentalists must be 6 feet or more from any other person. Wind and brass instruments are currently prohibited for indoor worship, and must follow the same 30-foot guidelines as singers for outdoor worship.
- Prayer books and hymnals should be removed. A single-use printed bulletin (with limited handling) may be made available for attendees, in addition to a digital bulletin. Be sure to alert your congregation of this in advance so people come prepared with tablets, phones, etc. to access it. Bulletins should be printed, copied, and placed in the church or narthex 3 days before the scheduled service, where congregants will pick them up on the day of the service. This is to allow time for any highly unlikely but theoretically possible contamination to dissipate.
- Congregants should exchange the peace with a wave, bow, or other non-contact greeting from their place. They should not move closer to others in order to exchange the peace.
- Online giving is the safest form for the offering and should be encouraged. The offering is not to be passed from person to person. Receptacles for the offering may be

positioned at the entry and exit points of the space or other convenient locations, to help prevent close contact. At the end of the service, the offering should be secured and counted according to congregation practices, modified to ensure distancing, masks, and hand hygiene (gloves/hand sanitizer).

- At this time, Holy Baptism is still available in the form of Emergency Baptism, which may be done within a household, but not as part of in-person worship, until further notice from the RRR Task Force and the Bishop.
- Additional guidance for baptisms, weddings, and funerals will be developed and distributed by the Bishop at a later date.

**Outdoor worship requires adherence to the following guidelines:**

- A maximum of 25 people are allowed at outside gatherings in NJ (6/2/20). When state maximums increase, the number of people at outdoor worship may increase.
- Available seating must be arranged so as to ensure social distancing. This must include a clear layout so that if family/household unit is seated together, anyone else must be seated 6 feet away.
- Besides the maximum number allowed, all other guidelines listed for indoor worship apply to outdoor worship.
- Outdoor weddings may follow the same guidelines as other outdoor worship services.
- Graveside funerals may follow the same guidelines as other outdoor worship services.
- Closed tents should be considered indoor worship or meeting venues and all guidelines for worship or meetings inside church buildings applies to closed tents.
- Canopies or tents with no sides may be considered outdoor worship venues.

# Procedures for Communion<sup>1</sup>

**NOTE:** If you do not feel that you can offer Holy Communion safely in your context, don't.

## **Celebrant and Altar Party**

In Stages One and Two, the Holy Eucharist will be celebrated with cup and paten on the altar, and the Celebrant alone will drink from the cup. Others, including the chancel party, will receive communion in one kind (bread), distributed by the Celebrant who has washed/sterilized their hands immediately before the distribution. The Celebrant may or may not wear gloves for the distribution of Communion.

In addition:

- The celebrant does not need to wear a mask for the prayer of consecration. If this is the case, the rest of the chancel party must remain more than 6 feet away, and the bread should be covered appropriately to prevent droplet contact.
- Because it is difficult to properly clean chasubles, the celebrant may remove it prior to distributing communion. This eliminates an issue should a parishioner inadvertently sneeze or cough on them. They should put the chasuble back on once the distribution of communion is complete.
- The celebrant should wear a mask to distribute the host, preferably an N95 mask if available.
- The host should be placed in the hands of the communicant in a way that avoids touching the communicant's hand. It may not be placed in the mouth.
- If the celebrant inadvertently touches the communicant's hand, they should place the paten/ciborium down and re-sterilize their hands before resuming distribution. It is not necessary to use hand sanitizer between each communicant unless they make contact.

## **Communicants**

- When communion is offered, it should be clearly stated that if anyone has concerns about receiving communion, they are entirely welcome to refrain from doing so. The Prayer for Spiritual Communion should be added to the bulletin to accommodate those who choose to stay in their pew.
- Communicants should wear a mask and remove it only immediately before receiving the host, after which they should put the mask back on.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted with gratitude from the Diocese of Pennsylvania.

- Communicants will not kneel, but remain standing at an appropriate distance.
- Before the communicant reaches the minister to receive, there should be a station equipped with hand sanitizer. Immediately before receiving, the communicant should use hand sanitizer on their hands. If a church wishes, they may also set up a similar station so that the communicant can use hand sanitizer on their hands on the way back to their pew. It is important, however, that these stations not be set up in any way that causes a bottleneck or otherwise causes parishioners to come too close to one another.
- If a person wishes to receive a blessing in lieu of receiving communion, they should come forward and indicate this to the priest in the usual manner. The priest should avoid making physical contact and instead simply make the sign of the cross while pronouncing the blessing.

The details of distribution will vary from church to church, depending on their space and configuration. It may be necessary to rearrange or remove pews or furniture to create the safest possible arrangement. Possible strategies for this can also include:

- Individuals come forward one at a time
- The celebrant brings the host to a location that is more open so that people may approach more safely
- If people will be standing in line waiting to receive, place tape on the floor to indicate proper spacing between persons

## Safe Gathering

If anyone planning to attend in-person worship feels ill in any way, they should NOT attend. If a churchgoer exhibits clear signs of illness during a service, a person designated in the parish (e.g. usher, vestry member or warden) will request that they return to their car and head home or to the doctor.

A complete record of all in attendance, including names and contact information (email and phone) must be kept so as to allow contact tracing later, as needed. This record-keeping needs to be done **without** sharing pen, paper, clipboard, etc. It may be done electronically or at a distance. This record should be in the possession of (or accessible online by) more than one leader in the congregation.

Each congregation will identify and publicize who to contact in the congregation in case an attendee has to report a possible COVID-19 infection following an in-person service. This may be the clergy, wardens, or vestry members or others designated by them.

All individuals present will wear masks. Hand sanitizer and masks must be made available for use as needed by all in attendance. Attendees should be encouraged to bring their own masks if possible.

Where possible, ushers should not be in high-risk categories. In all cases, they must be willing to serve in this more exposed capacity and able to be firm with fellow parishioners (re: masks, reservations, seating arrangements, etc.). Extra ushers and attendants (who count towards the maximum number of attendees) should be stationed so as to ensure procedures for entrance, parking and social distancing are followed.

Access to parking lots must be managed so as to maintain social distancing, for example, assigning a parking lot attendant to discourage close gatherings on church premises might be a reasonable alternative. After the service, ushers will be expected to keep parishioners moving out of the worship area, into their cars, and headed home. Gatherings on the grounds and in parking lots before and after worship are discouraged.

Attention must be paid to entrance and exit placements to avoid inadvertent infringements on social distancing.

Other allowed use of facilities, such as feeding ministries, should not occur at the same time as any indoor or outdoor worship.

### Scheduling

A minimum of one hour between the end of one service and the beginning of another should be scheduled to allow for cleaning and avoid overlap of attendees.

## Other ministries of the congregation

### Christian Education/Sunday School

- There should be no-in person educational activities for summer 2020, including Vacation Bible School, summer children's activities, or any other formation activities
- Virtual meetings are encouraged

### Nursery

- No childcare shall be offered by those not living in the same household as the child. No regular nursery care should be offered; household members may use church childcare facilities for urgent needs, and the space must be cleaned and disinfected (according to recommendations elsewhere in this document) after any use.

### Coffee Hour/Fellowship activities

- Such activities are highly discouraged at this time
  - Any food must be pre-packaged single serve ONLY, including condiments, and taken "to go" rather than consumed at the church.
  - Participants must maintain 6-foot social distance
  - Masks must be worn at all times while on the church grounds.

### Outreach Ministries

- Outdoor activities are encouraged.
- Feeding programs should have take-out/pick up only policy.
- Anyone involved in food preparation must follow CDC guidance and wear masks, gloves, and maintain 6-foot distancing at all times.
- Maintain 6-foot social distance.
- Masks must be worn at all times while on the church grounds.

### Pastoral Care

- Clergy and Eucharistic Visitors may decide on a case-by-case basis for visiting parishioners
  - Parishioners must agree in advance to the visit and visitor and parishioner must agree on what protocols they expect to be followed (social distancing, wearing a mask, etc.)
  - Physical touch is discouraged at this stage. If it cannot be avoided, immediate handwashing is recommended, or the use of minimum 60% alcohol hand sanitizer per CDC recommendations

## **Final Candidate Interviews for Congregations in Transition**

Recognizing the importance of a face-to-face interview involving the final candidate for a priest position and the importance of the priest physically touring the church property, the following guidance is provided:

- A face-to-face meeting of the candidate and, if applicable, their partner, and no more than four designees of the Vestry is encouraged. Participants are to remain socially distanced and may lower their masks as long as there is a minimum of 14 feet of space between participants. The meeting should take place in the largest possible room available, and be as short as possible if conducted indoors. Additional members of the Vestry are encouraged to join in via an online meeting platform.
- The interview group may share a meal of prepared individual portions obtained via take-out.
- No handshakes or physical touch of any kind are permitted.
- One designee of the Vestry may accompany the candidate on a tour of the church property, maintaining social distancing, and wearing masks and gloves.

## **Stage Two recommendations**

We anticipate that Stage Two guidelines will be similar to Stage One, with increased numbers of people present.

As it becomes appropriate, guidelines for limited in-person fellowship and education activities may be released.



## Appendix A

### Helpful links

NJ multi-stage plan for re-opening

<https://www.nj.gov/governor/news/news/562020/approved/20200518a.shtml>

NJ Covid-19 Information Hub

<https://covid19.nj.gov/index.html>

NJ guidance for houses of worship

<https://covid19.nj.gov/faqs/nj-information/general-public/are-churches-and-other-houses-of-worship-still-offering-services>

NJ Association for the Education of Young Children

<https://njaeyc.org/>

Guidance for New Jersey Child Care Facilities on COVID-19 Related Health and Safety Requirements published on 5/29/20 can be accessed here:

<https://www.nj.gov/dcf/news/Final.CC.Health.and.Safety.Standards.pdf>

Directory of local health departments in NJ

<https://nj.gov/health/lh/documents/LocalHealthDirectory.pdf>

When to report a communicable disease

<https://nj.gov/health/cd/reporting/when/>

Information on masks

<https://covid19.nj.gov/faqs/nj-information/how-to-minimize-your-risk/should-i-purchase-or-wear-a-mask-for-protection-from-covid-19>

An archive of all Executive Orders in the State of New Jersey can be found here:

[https://nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/approved/eo\\_archive.html](https://nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/approved/eo_archive.html)

Administrative Orders for the State of New Jersey are here:

[https://nj.gov/governor/news/ao/approved/ao\\_archive.shtml](https://nj.gov/governor/news/ao/approved/ao_archive.shtml)

Guidance for “essential retail businesses” as of May 19, 2020, is here:

<https://nj.gov/governor/news/ao/docs/AO2020-13.pdf>

The New Jersey Department of Health list of PPE suppliers:

<https://forms.business.nj.gov/ppevendor/list/>

Guidance for Reopening Buildings After Prolonged Shutdown or Reduced Operation

[https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/building-water-system.html?deliveryName=USCDC\\_248\\_DM25447](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/building-water-system.html?deliveryName=USCDC_248_DM25447)

Guidance from American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers  
<https://www.ashrae.org/technical-resources/resources>

## **Appendix B**

**Sample Congregational Survey to assess readiness of congregation  
(begins on next page)**

**Downloadable Word doc is available here:**

**<https://blog.lifeway.com/newsroom/2020/04/23/lifeway-research-develops-free-tool-for-churches-to-help-plan-for-reopening/>**

*Notes for Survey Administrator:*

*Swap in your church's specific names for the words in blue.*

*Remove any options that do not apply or that your church would not consider.*

Thank you for participating in this confidential survey.

This survey includes several questions about your current feelings about returning to regular church activities when local government lifts its ban on public gatherings.

1. When our local government lifts its ban or guidance against churches meeting, which best describes your attitude toward returning to a worship service at church? Select one:
  - I will return the first opportunity we have.
  - I will return at first opportunity but with some concerns and precautions.
  - I will wait several additional weeks before I attend.
  - It may be quite a while before I return.
  - Not sure
  
2. In addition to our local government lifting its ban or guidance against public gatherings, are there other signals you would want to see before you return to attend a worship service at church? Select all that apply
  - Local businesses are open again
  - Local restaurant seating areas are open again
  - Schools are open again
  - The number of coronavirus cases near me is very small
  - Most social distancing recommendations have been lifted
  - None of these
  - Not sure
  
3. What precautions, if any, do you plan to take when you return to a worship service? Select all that apply
  - I will wear a face mask
  - I will stand and sit in places where I will be at least 6 feet from others (beyond my own family)
  - I will avoid shaking hands
  - I will avoid any physical contact
  - I will avoid crowded hallways
  - I will bring hand sanitizer
  - None of these

4. What precautions, if any, do you expect our church to take for worship gatherings? Select all that apply
- Limit handouts of any kind (e.g., [worship guide](#), notes pages, etc.)
  - Use a new method for distributing [Lord's Supper](#) elements
  - Use a new method for collecting tithes and offerings
  - Encourage social distancing in [sanctuary seating](#)
  - Encourage social distancing in [small group seating](#)
  - Prop doors open so people do not have to touch handles
  - Set up one-way foot traffic entering and exiting the building and [sanctuary](#)
  - Provide hand sanitizer stations
  - Discourage shaking hands
  - Allow a longer period of time between worship service hours
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  - None of these
5. Would you be willing to attend your [small group](#) where it typically meets?
- Yes
  - Not right away
  - I do not have a [small group](#)
6. Do you have children age 18 or younger who live with you and typically attend church with you?
- Yes
  - No

Ask if Q6=Yes

7. Would you allow your child(ren) to attend their [small group](#) where it typically meets?
- Yes
  - Not right away
  - My children do not typically attend a [small group](#)

Ask if Q6=Yes

8. What precautions, if any, do you expect the church to take in children's and student [small groups](#) when they resume? Select all that apply
- Reduce the number of people in each room or move to a larger room
  - Seat children where they cannot touch each other
  - Prohibit snacks that would cause children to put their hands to their mouths
  - Require teachers to wear face masks
  - Encourage kids to wear face masks
  - Require teachers to wear gloves
  - Ask kids to use hand sanitizer before entering
  - Plan activities in which kids do not need to touch each other
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  - None of these

9. Which of the following describes the attendance level at which you would be comfortable attending a worship service?
- I would be comfortable attending if the sanctuary is...
- Filled to capacity (every seat taken)
  - Three-quarters filled (some empty seats throughout but no empty rows)
  - Half filled (most people have empty seats either beside them or in front of them)
  - One quarter filled (most people have empty seats beside them and in front of them)
  - None of these (at least right away)
10. When our local government lifts its ban or guidance against public gatherings, which of the following would you prefer for our church?
- Resume in person worship services at our church immediately
  - Meet in small groups in homes for a few more weeks before resuming in person worship services
  - Not sure
11. Would you be willing to attend a worship service at a different time than you typically attend to allow people to be more spread out in the sanctuary?
- Yes
  - No
  - Not sure
12. Would you be willing to attend a worship service in an overflow room to ensure people (in the sanctuary and overflow rooms) are spread out?
- Yes
  - No
  - Not sure
13. How long have you been attending?
- I am new in 2020
  - Less than 2 years
  - 2-4 years
  - 5-9 years
  - 10+ years
  - I don't remember
14. What is your age?
- Less than 18
  - 18-29
  - 30-49
  - 50-69
  - 70+
  - I prefer not to answer

## Appendix C

### Cleaning resources

Cleaning and disinfecting your facility

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>

Guidance for cleaning and disinfecting

[https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/pdf/Reopening\\_America\\_Guidance.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/pdf/Reopening_America_Guidance.pdf)

A full list of EPA registered products

[https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2#filter\\_col1](https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2#filter_col1).

#### **Videos about cleaning that may be helpful:**

What Cleaning Supplies Will Help Combat COVID-19? by UC San Diego Health

<https://youtu.be/tW-Gj4c35yk>

Coronavirus: Safely Cleaning and Disinfecting at Work by 32BJTrainingFund

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tbGvwmeyVO4&t=266s>

This document is available at: [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/pdf/ReOpening\\_America\\_Cleaning\\_Disinfection\\_Decision\\_Tool.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/pdf/ReOpening_America_Cleaning_Disinfection_Decision_Tool.pdf)

# GUIDANCE FOR CLEANING & DISINFECTING

## PUBLIC SPACES, WORKPLACES, BUSINESSES, SCHOOLS, AND HOMES



SCAN HERE  
FOR MORE  
INFORMATION

### 1 DEVELOP YOUR PLAN

**DETERMINE WHAT NEEDS TO BE CLEANED.** Areas unoccupied for 7 or more days need only routine cleaning. Maintain existing cleaning practices for outdoor areas.

**DETERMINE HOW AREAS WILL BE DISINFECTED.** Consider the type of surface and how often the surface is touched. Prioritize disinfecting frequently touched surfaces.

**CONSIDER THE RESOURCES AND EQUIPMENT NEEDED.** Keep in mind the availability of cleaning products and personal protective equipment (PPE) appropriate for cleaners and disinfectants.

Follow guidance from state, tribal, local, and territorial authorities.

### 2 IMPLEMENT

**CLEAN VISIBLY DIRTY SURFACES WITH SOAP AND WATER** prior to disinfection.

**USE THE APPROPRIATE CLEANING OR DISINFECTANT PRODUCT.** Use an EPA-approved disinfectant against COVID-19, and read the label to make sure it meets your needs.

**ALWAYS FOLLOW THE DIRECTIONS ON THE LABEL.** The label will include safety information and application instructions. Keep disinfectants out of the reach of children.

### 3 MAINTAIN AND REVISE

**CONTINUE ROUTINE CLEANING AND DISINFECTION.** Continue or revise your plan based upon appropriate disinfectant and PPE availability. Dirty surfaces should be cleaned with soap and water prior to disinfection. Routinely disinfect frequently touched surfaces at least daily.

**MAINTAIN SAFE PRACTICES** such as frequent handwashing, using cloth face coverings, and staying home if you are sick.

**CONTINUE PRACTICES THAT REDUCE THE POTENTIAL FOR EXPOSURE.** Maintain social distancing, staying six feet away from others. Reduce sharing of common spaces and frequently touched objects.

For more information, please visit **CORONAVIRUS.GOV**



CS3164858 April 23, 2020 1:56 PM



## MAKING YOUR PLAN TO CLEAN AND DISINFECT

**Cleaning** with soap and water removes germs, dirt, and impurities from surfaces. It lowers the risk of spreading infection.

**Disinfecting** kills germs on surfaces. By killing germs on a surface after cleaning, it can further lower the risk of spreading infection.



Is the area indoors?

**YES**

It is an indoor area.

**NO**

**Maintain existing cleaning practices.**

Coronaviruses naturally die in hours to days in typical indoor and outdoor environments. Viruses are killed more quickly by warmer temperatures and sunlight.

Has the area been occupied within the last 7 days?

**YES**

Yes, the area has been occupied within the last 7 days.

**NO**

**The area has been unoccupied within the last 7 days.**

The area will need only routine cleaning.



Is it a frequently touched surface or object?

**YES**

Yes, it is a frequently touched surface or object.

**NO**

**Thoroughly clean these materials.**

Consider setting a schedule for routine cleaning and disinfection, as appropriate.



What type of material is the surface or object?

**Hard and non-porous materials like glass, metal, or plastic.**

**Visibly dirty surfaces should be cleaned prior to disinfection.**

Consult EPA's list of disinfectants for use against COVID-19, specifically for use on hard, non-porous surfaces and for your specific application need. More frequent cleaning and disinfection is necessary to reduce exposure.

**Soft and porous materials like carpet, rugs, or material in seating areas.**

**Thoroughly clean or launder materials.**

Consider removing soft and porous materials in high traffic areas. Disinfect materials if appropriate products are available.



# Appendix D

## Print Resources

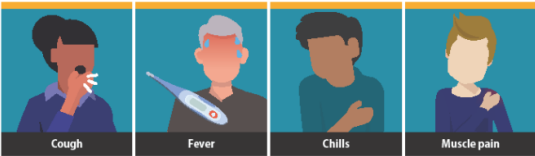
Below are samples of signs from the CDC that you can download and print to hang in your buildings. Many are available in multiple languages. You can access them here:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/print-resources.html?Sort=Date%3A%3Adesc>

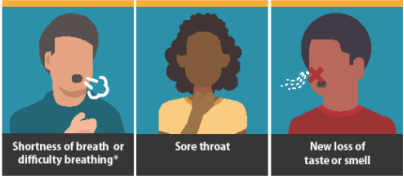
It is highly recommended that printed health materials be placed in areas such as bathrooms and the church vestibule.

### Symptoms of Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Know the symptoms of COVID-19, which can include the following:



Cough      Fever      Chills      Muscle pain




Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing      Sore throat      New loss of taste or smell

Symptoms can range from mild to severe illness, and appear 2-14 days after you are exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19.

**\*Seek medical care immediately if someone has emergency warning signs of COVID-19.**

- Trouble breathing
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion
- Inability to wake or stay awake
- Bluish lips or face



This list is not all possible symptoms. Please call your medical provider for any other symptoms that are severe or concerning to you.




[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)

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### Please wear a cloth face covering.



Maintain a distance of 6 feet whenever possible.



[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)

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