

## COVID-19 Church Specific Plan

Name of Church:

Address of Church:

Name of Site Supervisor:

Date:

Contact Information for the County Public Health Department:

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**State and County Orders only permit 50% occupancy of the church building or 200 parishioners (whichever is less) to be inside the church during mass.**

**For the Church building**

1. Traffic control will be established for the church so that parishioners enter by one door and out another door (unless not possible at a church location). Signage will be placed outside the doors instructing parishioners as to the entrance and exit of the building.
2. Visual cues such as tape or signs will be placed on the ground, floor or wall, 6 feet apart and parishioners will be asked to observe those visual cues and not move closer to someone (other than a household family member). This will be true for entering the church as well as for the communion procession.
3. A volunteer wearing a facemask will assist parishioners in finding seats where the six feet apart distance is maintained.
4. No more than the allowed number of parishioners will be granted entrance to the building.
5. Signage will be placed at all entrances to the church that explains the COVID-19 symptoms (those with symptoms will be asked not to enter), how to stop the spread of COVID-19 and the importance of handwashing.
6. Baptismal fonts and holy water stoups are to remain empty until further notice.
7. Hymnals, missalettes, and other worship aids are to be removed from pews. If the use of worship aids cannot be avoided, they should be disposable, used only once, and then discarded. Likewise, printed bulletins are not to be distributed; digital bulletins can be posted on parish web sites or sent by e-mail.
8. Seating arrangements in the sanctuary must maintain social distancing of 6 feet apart.
9. Signs or markers on pews, walls, and floors can help to ensure that proper distancing is maintained. Such signs and markers should be dignified in appearance.

10. Routes of liturgical processions must maintain social distancing between ministers and members of the assembly.
11. Routes for people approaching to receive communion, and then returning to their pews, should be established and clearly marked to ensure social distancing. (These may be very different from the routes to which people are accustomed).
12. Parishes should continue live-streaming services and, insofar as possible, continue ministry to those who are sick or homebound with the necessary precautions.
13. Pews and other surfaces in the church must be cleaned and disinfected after each mass. The disinfectant will meet the EPA/CDC guidelines. This link provides more guidance: <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>
14. Indoor air ventilation and circulation is to be maximized to the extent possible.
15. Doors are to be propped open, at least at times of entry and departure, to minimize contact with door handles or push bars. Ushers (with face coverings and gloves) may assist to minimize contact with door handles by opening doors when necessary.

**For Parishioners:**

1. Each parishioner will have his/her temperature taken when he/she arrives for Mass.
2. All parishioners will wear a face covering at all times during the Mass.
3. Upon entering the church, each person will sanitize his/her hands by using hand sanitizer or a hand washing station.
4. Parishioners will be informed *well in advance*, and be regularly reminded, of the special measures that will be taken during the Mass, to include:
  - a. The need to wear face coverings in the church and to sanitize their hands upon entering the church.
  - b. The need to maintain social distancing at all times, including in the pews.
  - c. The seating arrangements (e.g. ushers guiding people to the available seats in a particular sequence, assigning seating every-other pew, etc.).
  - d. The procedure for taking up the collection and the necessity that no one touch the collection basket
  - e. The procedure for receiving Holy Communion—including precise instructions on how to remove and replace their facial covering (see “Instructions for receiving Holy Communion” below) —and the routes to be taken to and from the sanctuary during the Communion rite.
  - f. The procedure and routes for departing from the church (including dismissal by pews). Traffic patterns need to be determined. One possible recommendation is

for the minister of hospitality to assist the exit of parishioners by rows starting from the back of the church first. It will be important to encourage social distancing as they leave the church.

- g. The need to disinfect the church before the next liturgy. If a person wishes to stay after Mass for a brief period of personal prayer, he/she may need to be reminded when he/she must leave so as to complete the needed disinfection of the church on time prior to the next Mass.
5. For the safety and well-being of parishioners, especially the most vulnerable, pastors should communicate to their communities the recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control regarding participation in public gatherings. This applies to those attending Mass and volunteers.
6. Parishioners will be encouraged to minimize the use of restrooms, since these must be sanitized after every use. Signs may be posted to remind congregants of this necessity.

### **For the Priest, Deacon and other ministers**

1. Ministers should be thoroughly trained on the contents of this document and the strict necessity to maintain social distancing and safety for all participants in the Mass. Training of all ministers for the celebration of Mass will occur.
2. All members of the assembly and all ministers, including the priest-celebrant, are to wear face coverings at all times while in church (the process of receiving Holy Communion will be discussed later). Children under the age of two need not wear a mask.
3. The use of lay ministers in the sanctuary—readers, altar servers, sacristans, and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion—*should be severely curtailed or limited*. Exceptions can be made to assist priests who may themselves be vulnerable.
4. Permanent deacons should discuss with their pastors particular circumstances such as age, pre-existing conditions, secular employment, or family health situations that may limit their participation in parish liturgical ministry.
5. Ushers will be limited to the number actually needed, given the size and layout of the church. Ushers must wear face coverings and follow all social distancing precautions. Ushers may also wear gloves.
6. One cantor and one instrumentalist are permitted (with face masks mandatory). Congregational singing is not allowed.
7. Routes for people approaching to receive communion, and then returning to their pews, should be established and clearly marked to ensure social distancing. (These may be very different from the routes to which people are accustomed.)
8. The priest should place the missal on a stand at the chair, hold it himself or even place it on the altar when he recites the presidential prayers. If a server is required to hold the missal, both the server and the priest must wear a face covering.

9. Ministers are to maintain social distancing as they approach or leave the ambo. A deacon who asks for the blessing from the priest-celebrant is to maintain social distancing and be wearing a mask.
10. All ministers, including the Priest-celebrant and Deacon, are to disinfect their hands before preparing the altar and gifts.
11. The number of ministers preparing the altar and gifts is to be kept to a minimum and social distancing is to be maintained; thus vessels, cruets, etc., *should not be handed directly to the Priest-celebrant or Deacon*. Ciboria with hosts to be consecrated for the congregation should be covered and set on a corporal to a side of the altar.
12. The Priest-celebrant will wash his hands himself at the side of the altar, using the vessels and towel placed there before the start of Mass or during the preparation of the altar.
13. The presentation of the gifts by members of the assembly is to be omitted.
14. Regarding the collection of the stewardship of treasure, Baskets may not be passed. You will need to discuss with your parish team how best to take the collection and safeguard it.
15. The practice of holding hands during the Lord's Prayer is prohibited except for household members.
16. The invitation, "Let us offer each other the sign of peace," and the exchange of peace that follows, are to be omitted until further notice.
17. At the time of the ritual fractioning, the Priest-celebrant should avoid touching consecrated Hosts that will be distributed to members of the assembly.
18. Each Priest and Deacon is to consume the Precious Blood from separate chalices. (Note that while the Deacon has his own chalice, he must be given his chalice by the Priest-celebrant; he is not permitted to communicate himself). Each is to purify the chalice he uses.
19. Immediately after consuming the Sacrament, the Priest-celebrant and Deacon are to disinfect their hands, even if they do not distribute Communion.
20. The distribution of the Precious Blood to the laity is suppressed until further notice, unless their celiac disease is so severe. In this case, it is left to pastors to determine how to best handle this situation, e.g. perhaps by consecrating a separate chalice for that person.
21. It is important to minimize the number of ministers of Communion. If the ordinary minister, even if he is the principal celebrant, is vulnerable to infection and no other ordinary minister is able to assist, then he may ask an extraordinary minister to distribute Communion. The practice of self-communication (i.e. a communicant

- taking a host from the ciborium instead of receiving from a minister) remains prohibited.
22. It is recommended that a small table is to be placed next to each station for distribution. On each table is to be placed a corporal, a purificator, and a hand sanitizer.
  23. Out of care for the priest, deacon or the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, Holy Communion is to be distributed onto the hand, without touching the communicant's hand. We do this out of a sense of care and concern for both the ministers and the communicants. Holy Communion on the tongue creates health serious health concerns during this time of the pandemic. If the minister of distributing Holy Communion touches the hand of a communicant, the minister is to place the ciborium on the corporal on the nearby table and thoroughly disinfects their hands before continuing with distribution of Holy Communion.

The use of gloves for the distribution of Communion is not allowed.

24. Instructions for receiving Holy Communion are to be communicated to parishioners using these or similar words:
  - a. Those who have health concerns and do not wish to receive sacramental Communion may make an Act of Spiritual Communion.
  - b. When you approach for Communion, please remain six feet from others in the line and from the minister. When it is your time to receive, keep your mask on and remain six feet away from the minister while he shows the Host and says, The Body of Christ. After you respond, Amen, approach the minister.
  - c. Place one hand under the other while keeping your fingers together, making "a throne for the King," as St. Cyril of Jerusalem says. Receive the Host in your hand, then step six feet away from the minister. Then carefully loosen your facial covering (or mask by an ear loop), consume the Host, and replace the facial covering.
33. Those who come forward to receive a blessing may do so, but the minister must not touch the person coming to receive the blessing.
34. After the distribution of Communion is complete, all ministers of Communion are to disinfect their hands.
35. With due reverence for the Body and Blood of Christ and due respect for the sacred vessels, purification may take place after Mass, to ensure careful and sanitary purification.
36. Prior to the Prayer after Communion, according to the needs of the gathered assembly or if live-streaming is taking place, a minister may lead an Act of Spiritual Communion for those who are present but, out of concern for their safety, did not receive sacramental Communion or for those who are watching via livestream.

37. The Act of Spiritual Communion may also be led by a minister prior to the distribution of Communion.
38. Pastors should dismiss the congregation by rows, under the supervision of ushers, to avoid crowding at the exits of the church.
39. Doors should be propped open to avoid unnecessary contact with door handles and push-bars.

#### **For Volunteers and Staff:**

1. Training will be completed
  - a. Information on COVID-19 and how to prevent it from spreading including which underlying health conditions may make individuals more susceptible to contracting the virus.
  - b. Self-screening at home including temperature and symptom checks.
  - c. Not coming to work or participating in activities if staff or volunteers have symptoms of COVID-19 such a frequent cough, fever, difficulty breathing, chills, muscle pain, sore throat, recent loss of taste or smell or if they or someone they live with have been diagnosed with COVID-19
  - d. To seek medical attention if their symptoms become severe including persistent pain or pressure in the chest, confusion, or bluish lips or face.
  - e. The importance of frequent handwashing with soap and water including scrubbing with soap for 20 seconds (or using hand sanitizer with at least 60% ethanol or 70% isopropanol when staff cannot get to a sink or handwashing station.
  - f. Proper use of face coverings including:
    - i. They do not protect the wearer and are not personal protective equipment;
    - ii. They can help protect people near the wearer, but do not replace the need for physical distancing and frequent handwashing.
    - iii. They must cover the nose and mouth
    - iv. Employees should wash or sanitizing hands before and after using or adjusting face coverings.
    - v. Avoid touching the eyes, nose and mouth
    - vi. They should be washed after each shift.
2. Staff will have a temperature or symptom check when arriving for work or volunteer activity.
3. The screener will wear gloves, a face mask and stay 6 feet from the person he/she is screening.
4. Cleaning and disinfecting protocols will be followed:
  - a. Cleaning and disinfecting of the building including all high traffic areas will be completed after each mass.
  - b. Cleaning personnel and volunteers will use EPA/CDC approved cleaning supplies.
  - c. Vestments, albs and linens must be laundered after each use.
  - d. Consider using disposable seat covers on pews that have cushioned surfaces.
  - e. The following must be sanitized after each mass:
    - i. Ambo

- ii. Chairs
- iii. Microphones
- iv. Music stands
- v. Missal
- vi. lectionary

**To Stay within the occupancy requirements:** [this must be customized by the location]

1. What method will the parish use to determine attendance? How will the parishioners sign up, and how will they be notified? Pastors may wish to use an online platform to allow people to sign up to attend Masses or assign Masses according to last names or some other system. Whatever means are utilized should be clearly communicated to parishioners.
2. Plans should be developed for situations in which more people are seeking to attend a Mass than can be permitted under the limitations on gathering.
  - a. Does the parish have enough cleaning supplies to clean the church and other areas between Masses?
  - b. What will be the procedures for cleaning the church and other areas (including the sanctuary, the sacristy, pews, surfaces, restrooms, etc.)? How long will it take to clean between Masses?
  - c. Given the above considerations, how many Masses are possible in a day? What additional space is available for use? Are there enough priests to meet this need?
  - d. Is the church properly prepared, with necessary signage in place? Do all routes for ministers and congregants maintain sufficient social distancing? Have all hymnals, missalettes, and other worship aids been removed?
3. Consideration may be given to the use of other available venues (e.g. parish hall, parking lot, etc.) for Masses, especially if this would allow for the sanitizing of other venues also in use. In this case, any table used as an altar should be dignified; chairs should be plastic or metal rather than cloth and thus more easily wiped down; and the arrangement of the space should maintain social distancing. All directives and recommendations in this document continue to apply for this option.

**Other Considerations:**

1. The dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation issued on March 12, 2020, is still in effect until further notice.
2. Even with the resumption of public liturgies, parishioners who are particularly vulnerable should be urged to remain home (e.g. over the age of sixty, have an existing heart or lung conditions, diabetes, or are otherwise immuno-compromised). Such individuals should not volunteer or be asked to volunteer to fulfill liturgical ministries. Likewise, parishioners who feel sick in any way, those with a fever or cough, and those who live with a person found to be positive for COVID-19, should be urged to refrain from public

gatherings, including liturgical celebrations, until a doctor determines it is safe for them to do so.

3. Children's liturgy is to be discontinued.
4. Gatherings before and after celebrations are prohibited, including ministers greeting the faithful before and after Mass.
5. Drinking fountains should be turned off.
6. Self-service pamphlet areas should be put away.
7. The parking lot will be configured so that social distancing is maintained. Every other space will be coned off.