



Archdiocese of
Washington

Parish Ministry

Reopening Plan and Guidelines

Onward Together in Faith

2020-2021

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Contents

Prayer	3
Letter from the Moderator of the Curia	4
Purpose of this Planning Framework	5
How to Use this Planning Framework	5
Planning Goals:	5
Communicating Decisions to the Parish	5
Operational Considerations	6
Policies and Procedures	6
Facilities and Supplies	7
Ministerial Considerations	8
Education and Training	8
Events and Gatherings	8
Health Procedures	9
Know Symptoms Related to COVID-19	9
Promote Health Hygiene for Parish Leaders and Volunteers	11
Guidance for Hand Sanitizer	11
Resources	12
Archdiocese of Washington Resources	12
Federal and Local Government Websites	12
Health Resources- Posters	12
Planning Resources	12
Family Resources	13
Songs	13
Videos	13
Articles	13

Prayer

“For God did not give us a spirit of fear but rather of power and love and self-control.” 2 Timothy 1:7

Father in heaven,

In these uncertain and confusing times, we come to you for guidance.

We know, Father, that you did not give us “a spirit of fear...”

Help us to overcome our fears and worries and have a greater trust in you.

Holy Spirit, stir up the gifts you have given us.

Strengthen within us the gifts of knowledge and understanding,

to better craft our plans for return.

Give us the gift of counsel,

to make informed decisions that take into consideration the needs of all.

Give us the gift of fortitude,

to strengthen our wills to carry out and adapt our plans.

Finally, strengthen within us the gift of piety,

so that we always remember that every plan and decision we make should,

ultimately, be to better love and serve you, God.

We ask all of this in the name of Jesus, our Lord. Amen

Letter from the Moderator of the Curia

Dear Pastors, Clergy, Religious, and Parish Leaders,

Thank you for your steadfast and pastoral leadership during this time of uncertainty. We can all be proud of how the parishes of the Archdiocese of Washington have responded to the coronavirus pandemic. We have kept the safety of our parishioners, clergy and staff as our highest priority while also maintaining access to the Sacraments, delivering charitable aid and teaching the faith. Managing and overcoming the challenges of recent months proves that with God, all things are possible (Mt. 19:26).

Over the summer, we reopened our parishes to the in-person public celebration of Mass and certain other activities on a limited basis. Now, this “Archdiocese of Washington Reopening Plan and Guidelines - Onward Together in Faith” provides information for parish leaders to develop their ministry reopening plan as well in light of the guidance and restrictions from your local jurisdiction. I am grateful for the expertise and hard work in the creation of this resource, with the assistance of the Office of the Moderator of the Curia, Pastoral Ministry and Social Concerns and the Office for Catechesis. These offices are committed to providing additional support to parishes as needed in the future. Utilizing the social-distancing requirements and other health and safety guidelines contained in the resource, parishes can effectively plan for ministry and faith formation in response to the coronavirus pandemic. The Central Pastoral Administration stands ready to support each of our parish ministries with the implementation of local plans.

These health and safety guidelines should be provided to all groups that utilize parish facilities and parish school buildings for their activities. Under the leadership of the pastor, each parish community must work together to ensure compliance with the guidelines to maintain a safe environment for all. Additionally, there is a human resource aspect to reopening our parish programs. The Office of Human Resources will support and advise the pastor as unique circumstances involving staff arise.

New information is being presented each day about the coronavirus pandemic and its impact on our nation and world. The Moderator’s office will continue to monitor and evaluate new information and guidelines. We will update and communicate any changes to operating guidelines as they are known.

You and your parish communities remain in my daily prayers.

Sincerely in Christ,

Rev. Daniel B. Carson
Vicar General and Moderator of the Curia

Purpose of this Planning Framework

Pandemic preparedness requires a thorough and ongoing planning process that includes pastors, staff, and ADW officials, working within the public health and local, state and federal guidelines to protect staff, volunteers, and attendees and slow the spread of COVID-19. This reopening framework provides operational and ministerial procedures that relate to the safe operation of in-person parish ministry programs in light of the COVID-19 outbreak. Additionally, response protocols in the event someone is infected with COVID-19 are available for the pastor through Human Resources at ArchdioceseHR@adw.org.

How to Use this Planning Framework

Parish ministers should use this framework to suit their local context and individual community needs. Each parish ministry should strive for transparency and engage the community throughout the planning processes. In addition to guidelines and recommendations, this document contains several resources meant as guides to help teams assess needs and planning for the 2020-2021 year.

Planning Goals:

- Reopen parish ministry with protocols to keep parishioners, children, staff, and volunteers safe.
- Reduce number of illnesses via prevention and education.
- Preserve continuity of core operations of parish ministry.
- Minimize disruption of parish ministry by developing alternatives and opportunities.
- Minimize economic loss.
- Consult public health agencies (local, state, and federal) for current guidelines.
- Coordinate and communicate with all parish leaders to gain support for the reopening plan.

Communicating Decisions to the Parish

Communication and collaboration with the parish community is essential to the successful reopening of parish ministries. Using the framework, leaders should consult with internal staff and community members to devise an effective communications plan. Reopening decisions may affect the ability and willingness of the volunteers and parishioners to participate and abide by the guidelines. It is essential to include training for both parish staff and volunteers on the parish-reopening plan.

Operational Considerations



Archdiocesan leadership takes into consideration the respective local orders and/or guidance from the District of Columbia and the five Maryland counties in its determination to open any/all parish ministry. Websites providing this information may be found in the “Resources” section. Parish programs may resume to maximum potential while following appropriate social distancing and cleaning protocols established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and state and local departments of health. Parishes should contact the Office of the General Counsel (legaladmin@adw.org) with any questions regarding local restrictions that may affect parish programs.

Operational considerations are comprised of two aspects: (1) Policies and Procedures; and (2) Facilities and Supplies. Creating policies and procedures first allows for an effective administration of facilities and supplies to meet those requirements in advance of opening parish spaces for in-person gatherings.

Policies and Procedures

- Regularly meet with heads of ministry to create an inventory of all parish programs needing space, frequency and size of anticipated gatherings. Be sure to include scheduling needs of multiple language and special needs communities.
- Conduct an audit of your facility to thoroughly understand potential spacing limitations and identify potential problematic areas (traffic flow).
- Establish parish guidelines for social distancing and the use of face coverings inside and outside of the classrooms, meeting and gathering spaces, hallways, bathrooms, and other common areas. Consult any applicable local orders to ensure compliance.
- Create a master schedule (all parish ministries) which allows participants to attend in accordance with the necessary social distancing orders. The schedule should allow for time between gatherings to clean and disinfect.
- Develop a plan to use multiple entrances and exits (or separate entry and exit doors) to discourage crowding in gathering and waiting areas. Consider a plan for arrival and dismissal inside and outside the building.
- Post signs highlighting guidelines and protocols.
- Communicate your plans with all stakeholders—staff, volunteers, parishioners, parents—often, and through a variety of media platforms.

Facilities and Supplies

- Plan for, and purchase, necessary disinfecting supplies and health and safety supplies (hand sanitizer, masks, etc.), as soon as possible, as some items may be delayed due to demand.
- Add markings to the floor/walls to highlight flow of traffic and designated standing spaces if you anticipate lines (allow for social distancing).
- Create and install physical barriers, such as sneeze guards/partitions, in areas where it is difficult for individuals to remain at least 6 feet apart – particularly office spaces.
- Do not use water fountains during the pandemic. Participants should bring their own water.
- Develop a schedule and assign staff and/or volunteers for increased routine cleaning and disinfection – particularly of high-touch surfaces. Create a cleaning log to track scheduled cleanings.
- Ensure adequate supplies to avoid sharing materials/objects, especially items that are difficult to clean or disinfect (pens, markers, etc).

Ministerial Considerations

The virus, the shutdowns and the changes in the way we do parish ministry have had, and will continue to have, an impact on our staff, volunteers, parishioners and families. It is important to understand that many volunteers, parishioners and their families may be grieving very real losses: someone they love, a job, a home, or even a way of life. **Pastoral and cultural sensitivity in listening and accompanying people in their pain is an integral element of planning to resume ministry.** At the same time, be attentive to fears and concerns as you strive to foster the well-being of the communities that comprise your parish program. Leaders should foster a sense of connectedness and cultural awareness, provide clear directions, and make sure all stakeholders have the necessary means to succeed as parishes reopen their facilities to in-person ministry.

Education and Training

- Communicate that anyone who is sick is to stay home without fear of consequences.
- Educate staff, volunteers and parishioners about wearing cloth face coverings.
- Offer staff and volunteers time for discussion and reflection about returning to in-person ministry.
- Anticipate, as possible, concerns and/or fears of parishioners (and parents), particularly for those with pre-existing conditions.
- Introduce meditation, prayers, and reflection opportunities for all parishioners.
- Develop, and make available, an alternative option (virtual/at-home) for individuals who are uncomfortable returning to the parish for catechetical and/or ministry programs.
- Since programs will include online/virtual elements, be sure that everyone has the necessary technology, as well as appropriate training, to navigate the platform. Be attentive to the fact that not all parishioners have the necessary technology and make available an alternative.

Events and Gatherings

- At this time, it is not advisable to schedule field trips and/or overnight retreats.
- Arrive in advance to ensure that seating layout and available seating complies with current safe distancing parameters (currently 6 feet apart).
- Arrange tables and desks to ensure appropriate spacing with all seats facing the same direction.
- For a small group setting, arrange chairs 6-8 feet apart.
- Instruct all volunteers and parishioners to report directly to their designated classroom, meeting or gathering space.
- When possible, assign staff/volunteer in designated areas where groups might gather to keep spaces open.
- Streamline check-in/registration process. Employ electronic communications as much as possible in advance, as opposed to lines during physical gatherings.
- Use proper signage to ensure social distancing for potential lines as they may form to check in for the event.

- Serving food and drink is discouraged. However, if your event includes hospitality, develop a plan utilizing CDC and local guidelines to safely serve food and/or beverages. Including, but not limited to, the following:
 - Have items pre-packaged in individual boxes or bags for attendees.
 - Avoid using communal items such as cream, sugar, condiments, or sauces.
 - No utensil sharing.
- Gloves will be worn and/or hands sanitized when passing out resources
- As possible and if safe to do so, keep doors and/or windows open to increase airflow.
- Stagger dismissal times to ease congestion at exits.
- Confirm that required cleaning/disinfecting of gathering spaces are performed (or completed) before the next group arrives.

Health Procedures

Everyone should wear a mask on church property at all times as required by current applicable state/local jurisdiction (unless exempted for reasons such as age, health condition or disability) and use hand sanitizer at the door. People not wearing masks, unless exempted, may be asked to leave parish property. Sanitizer should be available at every entrance into parish buildings, along with all other parish meeting spaces.

Encourage staff, volunteers and parishioners to stay home if they are sick and parents to keep sick children and teens home. If staff, volunteers or parishioners are showing signs of illness or running a fever, they are to go home, and, if exhibiting or experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 not attributable to a non-COVID-19 condition (e.g., allergies, asthma), are advised to follow guidance from CDC and state/local public health authorities .

If a parishioner, volunteer, or staff member reports contact to a COVID-19 case, the individual should not enter the building. Notify your supervisor and pastor. Staff and volunteers may be required to have a note from their healthcare provider before returning to the parish. Maintain confidential documentation of persons sent home and ensure confidentiality. Disclosing the identity of anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19 (other than to a public health agency or the Office of Human Resources) is prohibited. Any notices or communications to staff or the parish community about a COVID-19 exposure must not reference the person who tested positive by name, position, gender, or by reference to any other personal details. Pastors must contact HR (Nanette Lowe at lowen@adw.org) for communication guidance.

Within the bounds of confidentiality, provide pastoral care and support to staff, volunteers and parishioners who they or family members are ill with COVID-19.

Know Symptoms Related to COVID-19

The CDC website identifies COVID-19 symptoms and is updated as new symptoms are identified. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure and may include the following:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath, difficulty breathing

- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

Be observant and aware of children, youth, and adults who may be showing signs of symptoms or illness, which could include flushed cheeks, rapid breathing or difficulty breathing (without recent physical activity), fatigue, irritability, skin changes (rash), coughing or shortness of breath.

If staff, volunteers, or parishioners are running a fever or showing signs of COVID-19 symptoms not attributable to a known non-COVID-19 condition (e.g., asthma, seasonal allergies), consult with program supervisor: Catechetical Leader, Youth Minister, Designated Ministry Leader, and/or Pastor. Following consultation, they are to be sent home immediately.

Staff, volunteer leaders, and parishioners must seek medical advice and follow CDC criteria if they have had significant contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19 and/or if they have tested positive. It is recommended that people receive medical clearance before returning.

If youth and/or children are running a fever or showing signs of COVID-19 symptoms not attributable to a known non-COVID-19 condition (e.g., asthma, seasonal allergies), safely isolate the child from the group, and then notify the child's parents that their child is being sent home immediately.

If your parish does not have procedures outlined for immediate dismissal of minors, including how to contact parent/guardian, these must be developed before reopening ministries. If a person is isolated, arrangements must be made to safely clean and disinfect the area of isolation immediately after their departure.

While confidentiality must be maintained, report any incidents and concerns about positive COVID-19 result to your supervisor (Catechetical Leader, Youth Minister, Designated Ministry Leader, and/or Pastor). The Catechetical Leader, Youth Minister, Designated Ministry Leader, and/or Pastor will contact parents. Protocols have been sent to Pastors on how to implement a communication plan to inform the community in the event of a positive COVID-19 result. Pastors who have questions should contact HR (Nanette Lowe at lowen@adw.org) if they have questions.

Promote Health Hygiene for Parish Leaders and Volunteers

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after you have been in a public place or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

Promote healthy hygiene to protect yourself and others. Healthy hygiene includes social distancing (6 feet apart) and wearing a face covering.

Avoid sharing materials/objects.

Encourage participants to leave personal items home.

All must wash hands/use hand sanitizer regularly:

- Arrival
- Before and after putting on, touching, or removing cloth face coverings or touching your face
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- After using shared materials
- After using the restroom

Guidance for Hand Sanitizer

Hand hygiene is an important part of the U.S. response to the international emergence of COVID-19. Practicing hand hygiene, which includes the use of alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR) or hand washing, is a simple yet effective way to prevent the spread of pathogens and infections. CDC recommendations reflect this important role. Hands should be washed with soap and water for at least 20 seconds when visibly soiled, before eating, and after using the restroom.

Resources

Archdiocese of Washington Resources

- [Coronavirus Resources and Information](#)

Federal and Local Government Websites (Reopening Phases, Health Guidelines)

- [CDC Website](#): facts on COVID, travel, mask usage, workplace operations, etc.
- [CDC Guidance for Faith Communities](#): information on best practices, cleaning and maintaining healthy operations, etc.
- [CDC Guidance for K-12 School Administrators on the Use of Cloth Face Coverings in Schools](#): information on best practices and general recommendations, etc.
- [CDC Considerations for Wearing Masks](#): information on who and who should not wear a face covering, feasibility and adaptations, etc.
- [DC Coronavirus Website](#): information on reopening phases, testing, data on cases, etc.
- [State of Maryland COVID-19 Response](#): information on reopening phases, executive orders, state resources, etc.
- [Maryland Department of Health](#): information on testing, data on cases, etc.
- [Maryland Manufacturing Network Supplier Portal](#): information on where to purchase personal protective equipment and other materials.
- [Calvert County Website](#): information on reopening phases, testing, data on cases, etc.
- [Charles County Website](#): information on reopening phases, testing, data on cases, etc.
- [Montgomery County Website](#): information on reopening phases, testing, data on cases, etc.
- [Prince George County Website](#): information on reopening phases, testing, data on cases, etc.
- [St. Mary's County Website](#): information on reopening phases, testing, data on cases, etc.

Health Resources- Posters

- Use of Face Covering: [English](#), [Spanish](#)
- Symptoms of COVID-19: [English](#), [Spanish](#), [French](#), [Simplified Chinese](#)
- Know the Facts about COVID-19: [English](#), [Spanish](#), [French](#), [Simplified Chinese](#)
- Stop the Spread of Germs: [English](#), [Spanish](#), [French](#), [Simplified Chinese](#)
- Feeling Sick, Stay Home Sign: [English](#), [Spanish](#)

*Additional languages and poster sizes for some of the above listed resources can be found on the CDC website.

Planning Resources

- [CDC Event Readiness and Planning Tool](#)

Family Resources

Songs

- [Wash Your Hands with Baby Shark](#)
- [Hand wash and Mask wearing Song for kids](#)
- [Wear Your Mask Song with Vlad and Niki](#)

Videos

- [Understanding Trauma: Learning Brain vs Survival Brain](#) (5 min)
- [Finding Meaning in Challenging Times](#) (4:39)
- [COVID-19 Video Resources for Families and Educators](#) (multiple topics including: Kids and Masks; How Uncertainty Impacts the Brain; Social Emotional guidance for families)

Articles

- [Cloth Face Coverings for Children During COVID-19](#) (has suggestions for helping children adjust to wearing one and how to talk to them about it)