

COVID-19 Preparedness Plan for the Church of the Most Holy Trinity (Parish)

It's important to remember how COVID-19 spread around the world and through our state and communities. This is an extremely contagious virus and we need to take every precaution to prevent its continued spread. Keep in mind that any public place you enter potentially exposes you to this virus. As we come together as one spiritual family, we will be vigilant with our efforts in regards to cleanliness and virus/germ transmission awareness while cautioning that we cannot guarantee you will not be exposed while in our building.

A briefing of this information will be communicated to parishioners before church is open. The full plan will be available for all the faithful to read on our website during the course of the pandemic. We ask that all those attending Mass help to implement and enforce these guidelines in the best interest of all those in attendance.

We will continue to monitor and review the latest information from the archdiocese, responding from updates from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) or the Minnesota Department of Health, for the most up to date recommendations and make changes as needed.

As our parish transitions into Phase II of reopening, we will follow the below principles to facilitate a safe space.

I. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- a. Our first consideration must continue to be for the spiritual and physical health of our parishioners and those whom they encounter, especially the most vulnerable: the elderly and those with chronic illness.
- b. The obligation to attend Sunday Mass and Holy Days of Obligation continues to be suspended as long as the pandemic continues.
- c. All COVID-19 positive persons, those who are symptomatic, and those living with them, must stay home.
- d. Persons over age 65 and those with preexisting health conditions should continue to stay home during Phase II and avoid public gatherings, including in church.
- e. All the faithful should continue to follow hygienic practices at home: wash hands often, avoid touching the face, cover coughs and sneezes, etc.
- f. For the benefit of the homebound and those otherwise vulnerable and unable to attend in person, we will continue to record Saturday Mass and have available on our website to watch by 9 a.m. on Sunday.
- g. The course of the Liturgical Year is to be maintained and the primacy of Sunday is to be respected, even for those unable to attend in person. If attending Sunday Mass is impossible or inadvisable, the faithful may instead attend Mass on a weekday with smaller crowds (once weekday Masses are open.)

- h. If a person tests positive for COVID-19 and they attended a Mass at Most Holy Trinity within the 48 hours prior to the onset of symptoms (or 48 hours prior to the test), we ask them to inform the parish office immediately. The Church of the Most Holy Trinity will inform parishioners that they may have been exposed to a person with COVID-19 at Mass (will include specific day/time that Mass was attended) and will ask them to self-monitor for symptoms. The identity of the person with COVID-19 will not be shared to protect privacy.
 - i. The COVID-19 Preparedness Plan has been developed by the staff and leadership of the Church of the Most Holy Trinity. The Plan Administrator will ensure that all aspects of this plan are observed in the worship space. The Administrator for this plan is Rachel Barten.

II. SAFETY AND HYGIENE IN OUR WORSHIP SPACE

- a. Weather permitting, the church doors will be propped open to minimize touch, and windows will be opened to maximize air circulation.
- b. The main (west) entrance will be the only entrance open. All other entrances will be closed. Ushers will be at the entrance to promote social distancing as people enter.
- c. Hand sanitizer will be available at the entrance which everyone will be asked to use upon entrance. There will be instructive signs on how to stop the spread of germs and protect oneself from sickness in the entrance as well.
- d. Trained volunteers will wipe down high use areas with disinfectant after each liturgy, especially pews, kneelers, handrails, and doorknobs. The piano player will disinfect the keyboard and other touched surfaces in the choir loft after Mass.
- e. Restrooms will be closed. The faithful will be reminded to use their restroom at home prior to attending Mass.
- f. Hymnals, missalettes, and other commonly held items (e.g. children's books) have been removed and stored during the pandemic.
- g. Bulletins will not be available in church. Bulletins will continue to be posted on our website and emailed weekly. We will continue to mailed bulletins every-other week to those we do not have email addresses for.
- h. Baptismal fonts and holy water stoups remain empty. Fresh water will be used and blessed for each Baptism, and after each Baptism holy water will be disposed of in the sacristy.
- i. The altar vessel used for the distribution of communion will be washed with hot, soapy water.
- j. Decorations will be kept to a minimum.
- k. The COVID-19 Preparedness Plan Administrator will ensure that all aspects of the plan are observed in the worship space: hand sanitizer and cleaning supplies are well-stocked, liturgical personnel are observing social distancing, staff and volunteers are trained for their responsibilities, etc.

III. SOCIAL DISTANCING ON CHURCH GROUNDS

- a. During Phase II, the maximum number of persons admitted into a church building is limited to 50% of the total seating capacity. According to the fire marshal, the total seating capacity of the Church of the Most Holy Trinity is 304.
- b. Each person must remain 6 feet away in all directions from others not in the same household. This includes outside as well as inside.
- c. Every other pew will be roped off so that they are not available for seating, allowing for social distance between used rows.
- d. The weekend Mass schedule will be Saturdays at 5 p.m., and Sundays at 9 a.m. (There will be no 8 p.m. Mass.)
- e. Ushers will coordinate with each other to seat and monitor the number of people in church to allow for social distancing. Should we fill our maximum capacity, ushers will disallow further entry and people to come to a later liturgy or watch Mass online. Parish Council members will be available at some Masses to assist if the church should become full.
- f. Face masks are required for all assembly members (over the age of 2.)
- g. Areas of the church that are not required for Mass will be inaccessible, including the basement, confessional and crying room. The choir loft will only be available to the piano player and family, and on Saturdays to the video camera operator. Signs will be posted notifying people of this.
- h. The faithful should not proceed into the sanctuary for any reason, including to light vigil lights. The faithful may request that a vigil candle be lit by contacting the parish office.
- i. Liturgies that would crowd church buildings will be adjusted to ensure smaller numbers.
- j. Gatherings on church grounds before or after Mass are not allowed during Phase II.

IV. CELEBRATING THE LITURGY

- a. The priest will wear a face mask, use hand sanitizer, and observe hygienic practices before and after Mass. The priest need not wear a face mask in the sanctuary during Mass, provided they remain more than 6 feet apart from others.
- b. Altar Servers and lectors will not be used.
- c. Congregational singing is temporarily discontinued, since singing expels more respiratory particles than speaking does. Instrumental music will be used. The choir is temporarily discontinued until it is safe to resume. A cantor may be used.
- d. Bread and wine will be placed on the credence table instead of a gifts table.
- e. Processions through the assembly at the beginning and end of Mass will not occur.
- f. The collection will not be taken up before Mass. The faithful may drop their collection in a wooden box near the church entrance before or after Mass. Online donations are encouraged.
- g. The priest will wash his own hands during the Liturgy of the Eucharist, since there are no altar servers, after which he should also apply hand sanitizer.
- h. After the liturgy of the Eucharist, priests should apply hand sanitizer.
- i. Those over age 65 or otherwise at risk should not distribute Communion.
- j. Holy Communion will be distributed with precautions. (See "Distribution of Holy Communion.")
- k. After the Blessing and Dismissal, the priest will go directly to the sacristy.

V. DISTRIBUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION

Distributing Holy Communion requires special care. We must ensure reverence for the Blessed Sacrament yet retain social distance. Below are guidelines that we will observe as a result of diocese consultation with theologians, the Center for Disease Control, and the Minnesota Department of Health.

- a. The Communion distributor and the communicant should each apply hand sanitizer before and after Communion and wear face masks except when consuming the host.
- b. The faithful should stay on the floor markers, keeping six-foot intervals in the Communion Procession.
- c. Once the person ahead has received, the next communicant approaches. The minister holds up the host and (through the face mask) says, "The Body of Christ." The communicant, wearing a face mask, replies, "Amen." The communicant removes the face mask and extends both hands far in front of the body, hands held flat with palms upward, the left hand on top and the right beneath it (left-handed persons may reverse hands). The minister carefully places the host on the hand. The communicant picks up the host, steps to the side, consumes the host, and replaces the mask.
- d. The faithful should receive Communion in the hand. Those unable to receive Communion in the hand may discuss the matter with the pastor to seek an alternative.
- e. Wearing gloves to distribute Communion or to receive Communion is not permitted, nor is using tongs or other instruments, plastic baggies, cups, pre-packaged containers, etc.
- f. If while distributing Communion a minister touches a communicant, immediately after distributing to that communicant the minister puts the ciborium on the table and re-sanitizes hands before distributing to the next communicant.
- g. Immediately after Communion, the extraordinary ministers should apply hand sanitizer, and then transfer remaining consecrated hosts in a separate ciborium. After which they will wash their hands with hot, soapy water, and wash the vessel used with hot, soapy water.
- h. The priest will repose the ciborium with the consecrated hosts in the tabernacle.

Certified by:



Fr. John Lapensky