



# St. Paul's Episcopal Church COVID-19 Pandemic Operational Plan For Worship Services

**Prepared By:**

Logistics and Protocol Task Force

**Approvers:**

Karen C. Lewis, Rector

St. Paul's Episcopal Church Vestry



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## **1.0 OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE**

The purpose of this document is to describe a re-engagement and operational plan for church services during the current and evolving COVID-19 pandemic. This Plan is consistent with the Episcopal Diocese of Michigan (EDOMI) and the CDC "Interim Guidance for Communities of Faith" and provides detail specific for St. Paul's Episcopal Church.

This Plan intends to cover all operational aspects of St. Paul's including worship and non-worship activities and any use of the Church facilities during this time when a heightened priority is required to preserve the health and safety of our parish community.

This Plan recognizes the evolving nature of the risks associated with this pandemic and will be regularly reviewed and updated accordingly.

## **2.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Specific tasks presented in this procedure will be performed by volunteers from existing ministry groups (e.g., choir, ushers, Vestry, and Altar Guild) creatively assembled and managed to navigate this extraordinary time.

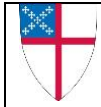
- **Rector:**
  - Assure the appropriate conformance of church operations to established canons and guidelines of the EDOMI and to the applicable executive orders of the State of Michigan.
  - Create a questionnaire that will be required of any person attending worship service. Required information: Wellness confirmation, confirmation of the lack of any direct contact in the past 2 weeks with a COVID-19 positive individual, contact information, awareness of current St. Paul's service changes.
  - Determine (based on the maximum occupancy guidelines set by EDOMI and the State of Michigan, the capacity of the Merrifield Room set up, and the pre-registration information) the number of needed worship services for each Sunday.
  
- **Schedulers:** Two or three persons
  - Create and manage a worship service pre-registration system. This can be an on-line or paper based (e.g., spreadsheet) device that allows parishioners (or visitors) to sign up for worship services in advance.
  - Receive calls from parishioners (or visitors) and record contact information into the system. Required information: Family Unit or Individual Name, Number and age attending, worship service date (or dates if requesting recurring services), phone number, email address, completion of COVID-19 wellness questionnaire, and any changes from date of questionnaire.
  - Provide the pre-registration information to the Rector and to the Communication Task Force on a frequent (if not daily) basis from which the Rector can determine the number of worship services needed (see Rector Responsibilities above).
  - Remind the registrants to contact them if they cannot make their worship time.



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- Provide the registrant list to the church Set Up team at least the day prior to the worship service time.
- Provide the registrant list to the Greeter team at least 30 minutes prior to worship service time.
- Contact any pre-registered individual in the event of cancellations.
  
- **Greeters:** Four per worship service
  - One greeter will help guide people to the entrance and help them maintain social distance
  - One greeter will possess the pre-registration list provided by the schedulers and check-in individuals using the registration check list and remind them to use the hand sanitizer.
  - One greeter will take the temperature of each person in the Family Unit or individual
  - One greeter will serve as usher to guide the Family Unit or individual to their seating following the directions in this procedure below.
  - All greeters will remain vigilant after the service begins to assist any late comers.
  
- **Cleaners:** Two to three plus the Sexton
  - Obtain worship service schedule from the Rector or the Schedulers
  - Clean and disinfect identified church areas (rest rooms, likely contact surfaces) per established procedure between each worship service
  
- **Set Up:** Two to three plus the Sexton (this group task could be combined with Cleaners if the set-up work load permits).
  - Apply directional arrows on the cloister hallway floor to encourage clear understanding of the requested directional flow from the entrance to the worship space.
  - Apply “6-foot social distance” reminders on floors at entrances
  - Prepare the worship service space based on the registration checklist provided by the schedulers. This includes chair placement, confirmation of signage, Music Wing and Parish House lockout (either by locked doorways or caution tape).



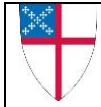
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### 3.0 PREREQUISITE CONSIDERATIONS

The following considerations are established to provide a framework for the that which follows:

- In order to support limitations for gathering size, a pre-registration for worship services will be established. This limitation has currently been set at 35, which is the number we can have in the Merrifield Room while maintaining social distancing.. Any person wishing to attend that cannot due to space limitations will be asked to register for the next available service. Attendees will be reminded to contact the church and stay home if not feeling well (for any reason). Registration process will allow for contact tracing if need be. Multiple services will be provided as attendance needs require.
- The church worship space and restrooms will be sanitized per a written procedure.
- Sunday School activities in the church will be suspended.
- Coffee Hour is suspended and refreshments will not be provided.
- The St. Paul's kitchen and Music wing will not be used and will be considered "no access" and not be entered.
- The Sanctuary will not be used for any non-St. Paul's activities (e.g., concerts).
- Only the Parish Hall restrooms will be in use. The center stall in the women's restroom will be locked out.
- Non-surgical masks will be required throughout the time preceding, during and following worship. Masks will be made available for those who do not have one.
- A sign-in will be required on entry that will be matched to the pre-registration list.
- Temperature checks will be performed at sign-in.
- Touchless hand sanitizers will be provided at entrances and exits.
- Attendees will be ushered to their seats prior to service and ushered to the exit after service.
- Social distancing of family units will be maintained throughout the time preceding and following worship.
- The "Passing of the Peace" will be performed without human touch.
- Worship bulletins will be provided for each attendee to access themselves.
- The collection plate will not be used in favor of a centralized drop box.
- Eucharistic Communion may be available in bread only.
- Piano music will occur, but there will be no congregational singing.
- Any commonly hand-held items typically found in the church area (nametags, books, hymnals) will be removed from the worship space.
- Appropriate reminder signage will be posted.
- Admission of visitors who have not pre-registered will be acceptable if they are amenable to this established Plan for worship activities and if space is available.
- This Plan will be communicated to all St. Paul's members and those responsible for performing specific tasks will be trained accordingly. The Communications Task Force will direct how this information is deployed.



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#### **4.0 PREPARATION FOR CHURCH WORSHIP**

- 4.1 Pre-registration. Due to the gathering size limitations a pre-registration will be required:
- Services will be conducted in the Merrifield Room until further notice and update to this protocol.
  - The service schedule will be established and communicated pending registration volume.
  - Allow potential attendees to select their worship service as least a week in advance.
  - Volunteer service schedulers will be identified that will maintain the registrants and determine when a worship time is full.
  - The registrant list will contain the family name, number of attendees, telephone and email contact information.
  - The schedulers will remind the registrants to contact them if they cannot make their worship time.
  - The schedulers will provide the registrant list to the church cleaners at least the day prior to the worship service time.
  - The schedulers will provide the registrant list to the lead usher at least 30 minutes prior to worship service time.
  - The schedulers will contact any pre-registered individuals in the event of cancelations.
- 4.2 Church Cleaning and Disinfection  
Volunteer church cleaners will be identified and the church worship space and Parish House restrooms will be cleaned per a written procedure prior to each day's service.
- 4.3 Post Reminder Signs and Floor Direction Arrows  
The volunteer church cleaners will confirm that signs are posted and the floor directional arrows are in place. They will also confirm that the handouts are in place (which have been placed on their chairs by gloved hands) and the collection drop box is in place and the worship space seating conforms to the pre-registrant list provided by the schedulers. The required family unit social distance is 6 feet 360°. It is recommended that the church Sexton is part of this church cleaning and preparation team.
- 4.4 Altar Guild Consideration  
The Altar Guild will still prepare the worship space per the liturgical calendar with the following modifications:
- 4.5 Provide a basin with soap, water, and towel for the priest if there is to be Communion offered. Utilize a larger credence table if need be.
- 4.6 Don gloves and face masks and sanitize all objects prior to placing on Altar.
- 4.7 Not more than 2 Altar Guild staff will work at the same time.



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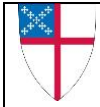
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- 4.8 Fresh purificators and corporals must be used for each service.
- 4.9 Bread to be consecrated is to be placed in a ciborium with the lid remaining on it.
- 4.10 A minimal amount of wine is to be placed in a cruet with a lid. Only the priest will consume the wine. An additional cruet (with a lid) of wine will be placed on the credence table so as to be consecrated for reserve.
- 4.11 No wine will be distributed to the congregation.

## **5.0 CHURCH WORSHIP**

Worship Liturgy will proceed as usual with the following considerations:

- Three “greeters” will position themselves at the North Entrance. (A sign posted on the south, main doors will direct people to the North Entrance.) To avoid bunching up this greeter team may need to position themselves well within the cloister hallway to allow the attendees to maintain their social distance and allow entrance in case of poor weather. The doors will be propped open, if possible, to avoid people and greeters having to touch surfaces. Ideally, a fourth greeter will position themselves outside to help people to the entrance while maintaining social distance.
  - One greeter will maintain the registration check list and mark and check in persons on arrival and direct them to use the touchless hand sanitizer.
  - One greeter will perform a touchless temperature check on each person and communicate that reading to the first greeter who will record the temperature.
  - One greeter will act as an usher and escort the family unit to seating in the worship space using the south entrance of the Merrifield Room. An additional hand sanitizer will be available at the entrance to the Merrifield Room. The required social distance is 6 feet 360°. This usher will point out the location of the service bulletin and remind the family unit of the restroom changes. This usher will use the touchless hand sanitizer on return to the entrance area.
- The attendees worship bulletin will be placed on their seats.
- The attendees will remain in their seats with face masks on and maintain social distance. The “Passing of the Peace” is still encouraged, but only with non-touch gestures.
- If there is to be Communion offered, an usher will release each family unit separately allowing a 6 foot social distance to be maintained between family units.
- Although piano music may be provided, congregational singing will not be acceptable.
- Collections will be placed by each attendee into the collection drop box provided. Two ushers will transport the collection box to the church safe. The collection counting will be performed at a time after the service day at the direction of the church rector.
- The usher will close the north church entrance (which will remain unlocked) and the north Merrifield Room exits at the start of service. An usher will remain at the Merrifield south entrance to assist latecomers as these will need to also be checked in. In which



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case, a second usher will be summoned to assist in this process (update sign-in sheet, temperature check, escort to seating).

- At the end of worship service the usher will direct each family unit (one at a time) to the north exit of the Merrifield Room. The usher will remind each attendee to use the touchless hand sanitizer on exit and to avoid touching the door surfaces. This usher may open the exit door to allow for safe passage and use the touchless hand sanitizer before returning to the Merrifield Room to guide the next family.

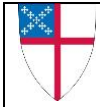
## **6.0 AFTER WORSHIP CONSIDERATIONS**

The following should be performed after worship and before leaving the church:

- The schedulers sign and date the sign-in lists, review for clarity, and provide the list to the Rector. These lists will provide the attendee count that is typically performed by the ushers (eliminating the need for the clicker counter) and allow for contact tracing if needed.

Any worship service attendee is strongly encouraged to contact the church rector, Karen Lewis, if they test positive or present symptoms, or have been in close contact (e.g., family member) with someone who has tested positive or have presented symptoms of COVID-19.

The follow up to this information will be considered a Pastoral Care issue and be directed by the church rector, Karen Lewis who will determine (in conjunction with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, the Ingham County Health Department, and St. Paul's Vestry) the appropriate contact tracing and worship attendee notification.



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## **7.0 APPENDIX A – EDOMI PLAN FOR RE-ENTRY**

*Published on May 1, 2020.*

The Coronavirus continues to impact our communities across the world. As Episcopalians, we have a deep desire and call to care for our people, our communities, and each other through this situation.

Our goals include:

- Offering Hope to our communities in this uncertain time.
- Continuing to provide our people and communities with the very best pastoral care now and in the months to come.
- Providing the continuity of prayer and worship, whether gathered in person or digitally
- Protecting the most vulnerable among us by limiting contact and initiating practices to slow the spread of infectious disease

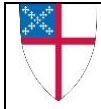
The following multi-phase plan contains practices for how Episcopalians in the State of Michigan will undertake re-entry after hiatus, pending further recommendations from health officials and our governor. **The way forward will not be immediate and may not be linear.** It is through a faithful balance of science and pastoral care that we will respond accordingly.

The plan contains the following:

- [Phase I](#): Hiatus
- [Phase II](#): Re-entry
- [Phase III](#): Deeper Participation
- [Other](#): Summer Programming
- [Appendix A](#): Questions for the Vestry
- [Appendix B](#): Resources

We recognize that all ministry is contextual. The guidelines articulate practices that fall into categories of “requirement” and “recommendation.” Requirements are mandatory and enforceable by the bishop and are listed using the phrases “*must...*” and “*...are prohibited*”. Recommendations, listed below using the phrase, “*we advise,*” are best practices and may be modified as appropriate to your local context under the authority of the vestry and/or clergy leadership.

And, as we continue to follow guidelines for safety, please remember to pray for the ill and recovering, for the grieving, and for the lonely. We pray for researchers, medical professionals, health policy experts, front line workers, and for those who clean and stock and ship. And we pray for each other - that we may continue to be a people of hope in the midst of fear and unknown.



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Contact your diocesan office with any questions or clarifications, using the following contacts:

- Eastern and Western Michigan: Canon Katie Forsyth, [kforsyth@eastmich.org](mailto:kforsyth@eastmich.org)
- Michigan: Anna Stania, [astania@edomi.org](mailto:astania@edomi.org)
- Northern Michigan: Canon Jane Cisluycis, [jane@upepiscopal.org](mailto:jane@upepiscopal.org)

## **Phase I: Hiatus**

### **Building and Office Use Guidelines**

We advise that staff members be permitted to work from home, as appropriate to their duties.

In-building staffing must be minimal and drop-in to maintain essential operations (deposits, mail processing, etc.) Staff members must communicate to ensure there is only one person in the building at a time and common surfaces, including door knobs, counter tops, and office electronics, must be disinfected before and after use.

We advise maintaining your standard count procedures with modifications to ensure safety and transparency.

### **Worship & Formation**

Churches are prohibited from in-person worship and all congregations are recommended to find means of gathering using online tools, including but not limited to:

- Sunday Worship
- Daily Office prayers
- Bible Studies
- Small Group formation and fellowship

### **Required Guidelines for Worship:**

- Live-streaming from inside a church building is prohibited unless authorized by your bishop<sup>1</sup>
- "Drive-thru" Eucharist is prohibited
- "Virtual communion" in which a minister "blesses" bread and wine through a phone or online connection is prohibited. Please see footnote for Presiding Bishop Michael Curry's "Word to the Church".<sup>2</sup>
- Graveside funerals of ten people or fewer are permitted, while following physical distancing and mask guidelines
- Outdoor weddings of five people or fewer are permitted, while following physical distancing and mask guidelines
- Baptisms are permitted on an emergency only basis

<sup>1</sup> On-site rectories are exempted from this requirement in the Diocese of Michigan.

<sup>2</sup> Word to the Church: On Our Theology of Worship: <https://episcopalchurch.org/posts/publicaffairs/presiding-bishop-michael-currys-word-church-our-theology-worship>



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### Recommendations for Gathering while Separated

We advise offering opportunities to gather your community while physically separated using digital tools like video conferencing and social media, for ongoing worship, formation, and fellowship.

We advise identifying a method by which your leadership will continue to engage your non-online parishioners, whether by phone, training and assistance to get access online, or some other means.

We advise that all pastoral care be conducted virtually, as you are able. In-person contact must be minimal.

### Service and Outreach:

- Requirements for group size, physical distancing, sanitation, and use of masks must be followed.
- Distribution ministries must limit volunteer time spent inside the building. Distributions may only take place outside or on a curb-side basis.
- There must be no preparation of food in the building unless authorized by your bishop.

## Phase II: Re-Entry

Please remember that many of our congregations are composed of individuals that meet the description of vulnerable population. Re-opening might not be appropriate for every congregation. Congregations might also consider stepping up in scale, offering, and size to reach the new limit.

Before you choose to re-open, please work with your vestry to answer the questions listed in [Appendix A](#).

### Preparing the Church for Re-Entry

Before any re-entry, congregations must deep clean the entire church building, including pews, bathrooms, doorknobs, light switches, stair railings, and microphones. Please see [Appendix B](#) for current cleaning guidelines from the CDC.

We advise the consideration of removing all non-essential items from rooms so that there are fewer surfaces to touch.

We advise posting signs and making announcements about non-contact greetings and reminders to refrain from shaking hands and hugging.

We advise communicating with your congregation before they arrive about the preparations you have done for their re-entry and to reiterate that, if they are sick or are of a vulnerable population, they should stay home and join online, if available through your congregation or another.



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**Building Use Guidelines  
Office Guidelines**

We advise that staff members continue to be permitted to work from home, especially the immunocompromised, parents of children, and those older than 60.

We advise keeping in-office functions as minimal as possible, only to ensure essential operations.

Any staff members working from church-owned buildings must continue to follow social distancing and sanitary guidelines, including:

- Maintaining six feet of separation between individuals
- Regular handwashing and sanitizer use
- Regular disinfection of common surfaces including door knobs, countertops, and office electronics.

**Other Guidelines**

Congregations must follow all physical distancing and hygiene guidelines including use of non-surgical masks. Please consider having a supply for those who arrive to your building without one.

Buildings must be thoroughly cleaned regularly and between user groups, paying extra attention to high-touch surfaces.

We advise posting signs outlining COVID symptoms and urging people to stay home/seek medical attention if they experience symptoms or feel unsafe.

We advise maintaining appropriate stock of tissue, soap, hand sanitizer, and disposable paper towels for drying hands.

We advise the consideration of allowing building users/rental groups back in (music lessons, etc.) on the condition that they are able to observe gathering limits and hygiene protocols.

We advise creating an emergency plan for possible outbreak and how you might respond in care, in communication, and in cleanliness. Some guidelines are included under "[Other: Addressing Positive Infection](#)"

We advise maintaining a visitor log (including phone numbers and email addresses) for all who enter the building in the event that they may have come in contact with someone with the disease and reporting is required. To the extent possible, the log should be managed by a greeter or an office staff-person or volunteer or follow some other no-touch method.

We advise the use of gloves only for food distribution. Epidemiologists are recommending against the use of gloves for regular activities, understanding that the virus lasts longest on smooth, shiny surfaces. Regular handwashing and sanitizer is more effective.



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**Requirements for Gathering Size and Contact:**

- Limit events and meetings that require close contact. Most, if not all, meetings and formation opportunities should continue to take place online.
- Limit any in-person worship gatherings to no more than 25% of your capacity, or the maximum number of your space while allowing 6 feet, 360\* of total separation between households, whichever is fewer. If your regular ASA surpasses that number, consider how you might spread the number of people gathered closely together at any one moment, including the use of hybrid-worship, multiple service times, or in another space.
- You may decide to consider holding services and gatherings in large well-ventilated areas or outdoors. Limit any in-person, outdoor gatherings to no more than the current State guidelines, or the maximum number for your space while allowing 6 feet, 360\* of total separation between households, whichever is fewer.
- Non-surgical masks are required. Please consider having a supply for those who arrive to your building without one.
- To avoid crowding and bottle necks, there is no receiving line following a service.
- There is no nursery or in-person Sunday school or coffee hour following a service. Continue encouraging people to leave the building rather than mingling in-person.

**Worship Guidelines**

Congregations may choose to begin to offer small in-person worship gatherings while following the following guidelines.

The following options might be appropriate considerations as congregations begin to re-enter:

- Maintaining some online worship and formation opportunities for those that will still be unable to join an in-person gathering, either due to risk or sense of safety
- Multiple services with fewer attendees to spread out the number of people gathered at one time
- Having people sign-up for services in advance while allowing space for visitors who may drop in
- Creating and assigning fixed seating to maintain safe distances
- Holding services outside
- Moving services to a larger and more open space, such as the parish hall

The preacher may remove their face covering for the delivery of the sermon, only if the preacher is more than 20 feet away from any other person.

**Requirements for Worship:**

- All common surfaces must be cleaned before and after worship, including door knobs, counter tops, pews, electronics, and sacramental items.
- Morning Prayer and Holy Eucharist are permitted, with safety modifications outlined in this document.
- Live-streaming may resume from inside the church building while maintaining appropriate physical distancing with any participants.
- There is no physical touching during the passing of the peace.
- There is no passing of an offering plate through the pews. Encourage worshippers to offer financial gifts online or to a stationary plate as they come in or during the course of worship to limit contact.



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- Households must sit at least six feet apart, 360°, if gathered for in-person worship.
- All worship leaders, including acolytes and lectors, must maintain at least 6 feet of distance apart at all times
- If using a shared handheld microphone, the device must be wiped and sanitized between users.

**(Optional) Sharing in Holy Communion**

Congregations wishing to celebrate Holy Communion in Phase II may do so using the following requirements and guidelines.

Clergy and parish leadership would consider local transmission rates and access to testing before deciding to offer Holy Communion.

Clergy may also decide not to offer communion or make alternative provisions if they have personal, pastoral, or medical reservations

If offering communion, parish leadership should provide notice to the congregation that there is some risk for public worship and receiving communion during this time of pandemic, and acknowledge that some may and should decide not to attend or receive.

Holy Communion is not an individual commodity but a communal experience. We therefore direct against the following practices:

- People bringing their own bread to be consecrated,
- Pre-consecrated bread being placed into pews for reception;
- Drive-by, drive-in, or drop-in distributions of communion

**Preparing for Holy Communion**

- Altar Guild members must wear masks and wash hands with soap prior to starting their work.
- Vulnerable persons of any ministry group, such as the Altar Guild or Acolytes, may choose not to serve.
- Fresh purificators and corporals must be used for each service.
- Wafers are preferred to homemade bread.

**The Consecration of Holy Communion**

- The Officiant alone must bring the bread and wine to the table at the time of the Offertory.
- All of the elements for Holy Communion are to be placed on the Holy Table for the Eucharistic Prayer.
- The Officiant, other Eucharistic Ministers and any participating Acolytes must wash hands or use hand sanitizer before celebratin and before distribution. Gloves should not be worn.
- The Officiant alone stand at the altar. Others should be 6 feet or more away.
- The priest's wafer and chalice are uncovered in front of the officiant during the Eucharistic Prayer. They are for the Officiant alone. It is consumed entirely by the Officant or appropriately disposed of after the service.
- The people's wafers should be ia ciborium on the table, which remains covered throughout the Eucharistic Prayer. If a covered ciborium is not available, a spare chalice and pall may be used. If a spare chalice and pall are not available, any container with a cover may be used.



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- During consecration, the Officiant touches the ciborium, not the wafers. Just as touching the container of wine is touching the element, so touching the container of bread is touching the element.
- The cup is reserved for the Officiant. It is consumed entirely by the Officiant or appropriately disposed of after the service.
- The distribution of consecrated wine is not permitted at this time due to the increased risk of contact and the risk of lifted masks in the presence of the Eucharistic Minister.

### **Distributing Holy Communion**

- Before distribution, a worship leader should explain to the congregation how Holy Communion has been prepared and should be received.
- Everyone distributing communion must use hand sanitizer before they begin distribution.
- Masks must continue to be worn during the distribution of communion. Ministers are encouraged to wear N95 mask, if possible. Gloves are not recommended. Persons two years or younger should not wear face coverings, as per CDC guidance.
- Communicants should use hand sanitizer before receiving.
- The bread must be distributed while maintaining 6 feet of distance between households, with the following options:
  - At stations, placing the host in the hand. Hand to mouth distribution is not permitted. The distribution should happen without directly touching the hand of the person receiving. If hand to hand contact happens, the minister should re-sanitize.
  - In the pews, directly to households, placing the host in the hand.
- If a blessing is preferred, the blessing must be given without touch.
- The floor may be marked to guide distance as households come forward. If space permits, the traffic pattern should be one-way to avoid crossing paths.
- Communicants should only lift their masks and consume the bread when they are at least six feet away from the distribution point.
- After distributing communion, any remaining elements must not be consumed but returned to the earth.

### **Eucharistic Visitation**

- Eucharistic Visitors are recruited from among those who are not at high risk. If the recruited visitors have not served in this ministry before, they must be trained before they begin service.
- Clergy may participate in Eucharistic Visiting or may choose to reserve themselves for emergency visits, thus limiting their exposure.
- It is recommended that visits happen outside on porches, patios, or sidewalks, as much as possible.
- Outside visits may follow the this practice or similar:
  - The recipient places a bowl or other container outside their door, perhaps on a small table.
  - When the EV arrives, they place the consecrated bread into the container, knock, and stand back 6 feet.
  - Appropriate prayers are said before and after the person consumes the consecrated element.



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**Recommendations for Worship:**

- Singing is among the riskier behaviors when it comes to spreading the virus.<sup>3</sup> We advise refraining from singing when gathered in-person, or consider how you might make extra precaution to further separate singers from the congregation and from each other.
- We advise the consideration of removing prayer books, hymnals, and bibles from pew racks during this time. Worship services may be followed using single-use bulletins (that are picked up rather than handed out), by sending a digital copy for people to access on their personal devices, or by use of screen and projection. Please make every provision for recycling single-use bulletins and limiting the number of bulletins printed for one household.
- We advise developing a plan for dismissing congregants in an orderly way to ensure social distancing as people exit.
- We advise empowering your ushers to remind participants about these guidelines and state requirements.
- We advise developing a plan to reduce the number of doors that people must touch to enter your service, including the use of door stops or greeters.

**Requirements for Special Services:**

- Baptisms, weddings, and funerals may resume and must be limited to 25% of your indoor capacity, 100 people outside, or the maximum capacity while maintain 6 feet, 360\* of distance between households, whichever is fewer, while following distancing plans.

**Service and Outreach:**

- Requirements for group size, physical distancing, sanitation, and use of masks must be followed.
- We advise that distribution ministries limit time spent inside the building and allow for outside or curbside service.
- Any food distribution must be to-go, or served by a person using gloves. Buffets are prohibited.
- Food may not be prepared inside the church building unless authorized by your bishop.

**Phase III: Deeper Participation**

**Building Use Guidelines**

Events and in-person gatherings are permitted. We advise making every provision to avoid crowding.

In-person meetings are permitted. We advise considering how you might enable your high-risk members to join your gathering digitally.

Regular office operations are permitted. We advise considering how you might maintain flexibility for staff members that are high-risk or have children unable to attend school or access childcare.

Communal spaces must continue to be cleaned on a regular basis, including before and after gatherings.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Abram Wagner summary on singing and COVID-19: <http://eastmich.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Dr-Abram-Wagner-COVID-19-and-Singing.pdf>



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We advise maintaining a visitor log (including phone numbers and email addresses) for all who enter the building in the event that they may have come in contact with someone with the disease and reporting is required. To the extent possible, the log should be managed by a greeter or an office staff-person or volunteer or follow some other no-touch method.

### Worship Guidelines

Worship gatherings of all sizes are permitted with the following guidelines:

- We advise considering maintaining an online/hybrid worship option for people that are high-risk and needing to maintain stay-home precautions.
- Physical distancing is not required. We advise avoiding crowding in the sanctuary and building to the extent possible. Consider offering multiple services to help people spread out.
- We advise considering continuing to remove prayer books, hymnals, and bibles from pew racks during this time and instead use single-use bulletins or digital copies for people to access on their personal devices. Please make every provision for recycling single-use bulletins and limiting the number of bulletins printed for one household.
- Congregations must continue the use of no-touch alternatives for the passing of the peace.
- Congregations must continue the use of no-touch alternatives for the offering.
- We advise setting aside special space within your worship area to be designated for people of vulnerable populations

Eucharist is permitted, with the following guidelines:

- Clergy must wash their hands with soap and water before services and use hand sanitizer visibly before distributing communion. If a clergy person or parishioner feels sick or has any symptoms, they should remain at home.
- We strongly advise against using the common cup. Though it may seem counterintuitive, intinction is not a safer choice. Please remember that receiving in one kind (bread or wafer only) is full participation in the Eucharist and congregations may consider making provision for distribution without the use of a common cup.

Coffee hours are permitted with the following guidelines:

- Congregations must make every provision to ensure adequate space to avoid crowding.
- A gloved person must distribute any food or drink. Buffets and self-serve are not permitted.
- Other: Summer Programming

We advise against offering in-person summer programming, including Vacation Bible Schools and Mission Trips.

While the risk to children appears to be somewhat lower, there is an ongoing risk of carrying the virus back home and sharing with other family members. We advise considering providing an online or no-touch drop off at-home activities.

*This plan was compiled in conversation with the bishops, staffs, and elected leadership of the Episcopal Dioceses in the state of Michigan, following current recommendations of the CDC, and with resources offered from [the Episcopal Diocese of Texas](#), [the Wisconsin Council of Churches](#), and the Office of the Presiding Bishop.*



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## **Appendix A: Questions for the Vestry**

We offer this list of questions for your vestry to consider in consultation with your clergy and parish staff. When we enter Phases II or III, we recommend you work through these questions before deciding to re-open for in-person gathering.

- How will you maintain connection with those who cannot gather in-person, even when restrictions are lifted?
- How many people can your worship space hold if you are worshipping with household groups sitting six feet apart?
- How will you discourage congregating after worship services?
- How will you continue to be invitational and open to people that are not yet part of your community?
- How will you ensure sanitation and disinfection for your communal spaces?
- How might your building use agreements need to be updated to reflect the new realities revealed by the pandemic?
- How will you maintain necessary stewardship to maintain operations while the congregation, or part of it, is dispersed?
- What assets do you have (space, yard, volunteers) that might be used to respond in service to your community in light of the pandemic?
- If someone contracts COVID-19, how will you communicate with your congregation and members who may have come into contact with that individual, while remembering privacy and pastoral care?
- If someone who has been in your building contracts COVID-19, how will you conduct an intensive cleaning prior to its next use?
- How will you communicate your safety plan and best practices to the congregation?

## **Appendix B: Resources**

[MapDash-COVID-19](#) - an online resource for checking COVID-19 data on a local level

[Centers for Disease Control](#) - vast resource for COVID-19 precautions and suggestions

- [Cleaning your Facility](#) - guide for building cleaning
- [Sanitizing Office Spaces](#) - guide for frequently used spaces
- [Preparedness for Sacred Spaces](#) - a set of best practices for religious institutions

[State of Michigan Coronavirus Information Hub](#)