

Episcopal Diocese of Rochester / Gathering in our Parishes

The plan you are asked to submit is based on two authorities:

The **Centers for Disease Control** has established that responsible re-opening requires

- Downward trajectory of COVID-like cases reported over a 14-day period
- Downward trajectory of positive tests as a percent of total tests over a 14-day period

In their second release of guidelines the **CDC** suggest that organizations should:

- Develop their plan
- Implement their plan
- Maintain and revise their plan

...in order to reduce deaths in our country.

The **State of New York's** Plan for Re-Opening requires two weeks between each phase to see the impact of each step on the trajectory of COVID-like cases and positive tests . Each Phase identifies the typed of activity that may be conducted.

Phase One:

- Construction
- Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting
- Retail - (Limited to curbside or in-store pickup or drop off)
- Manufacturing
- Wholesale Trade

Phase Two: after a two-week period of observation

- Professional Services
- Retail
- Administrative Support
- Real Estate / Rental & Leasing

Phase Three: after a two-week period of observation

- Restaurants / Food Services

Phase Four: after a two-week period of observation

- Arts / Entertainment / Recreation
- Education

This plan and resulting document is to be the work of the Vestry.

With this guidance in mind, we invite you to create your plan to show God's love and to care for all persons as sisters and brothers in the Body of Christ.

Individual congregations may discern that they will re-gather at a later date.

Keep in mind that this document merely indicates the earliest time that a church should gather for worship. Before a congregation begins, they must first create their plan. Churches may also choose to accommodate fewer than the Maximum Physical Distancing occupancy as if that meets their comfort level. Additionally, a congregation must use the smaller number of Physical Distancing occupancy or governmental limits on group size.

Gathering Our Parish

Name of Parish: _____

Address: _____

Proposed Date to Gather: _____

Sr. Warden: _____

Priest: _____

Date of Vestry adoption: _____

The earliest possible date a parish should gather for worship is four weeks after their region under the state plan is allowed into phase IV by the State of New York as long as new cases of COVID-19 continue to decline. If cases increase, the timeframe should be reset for another four-week period.

Please refer to the NY State guidance while answering the questions in this document at the following link:

<https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/governor.ny.gov/files/atoms/files/ReligiousandFuneralServicesSummaryGuidance.pdf>*

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Churches during the initial Phase may gather to conduct the non-sacramental offices found in approved liturgies, along with liturgical resources that the Task Force for Liturgy and Sacrament will develop. These will include a “Re-entry Liturgy” to mark the joy of uniting as the Body of Christ, along with other liturgies developed for this period where we break open the Word of God as the Body of Christ. The timeline for Celebrating the Holy Communion will be provided in a revision of this document, but will not occur in this Phase. This will provide an opportunity to support each other as each parish discerns and develops a plan for health and safety associated with providing the sacraments during this time.

I. WORSHIP

While not enumerated in the New York State Plan, the activity that takes place in worship most closely corresponds to those listed in phase IV.

For purposes of providing remote forms of worship for parishioners, a group of leaders up to ten persons may enter the church to live-stream or tape services providing they follow the protocols in this document.

A. Physical Distancing

This is an opportunity to demonstrate leadership by wearing a face mask as much as possible. Public speaking also increases the distribution of virus particles into the air, much like singing.

We practice physical distancing and plan in order to be in social contact with everyone in a safe manner.

CALCULATING OCCUPANCY

Normal Maximum Occupancy: _____

How to determine normal maximum occupancy?
Calculate the total length in inches of all pews in the room and divide by 22 or count the number of chairs in your standard arrangement.

Maximum with **Physical Distancing**: _____

Apply **Physical Distancing** requirements of six feet between individuals or family units to your space and count the number of people that may be accommodated.

How will you be invitational and open to people that are not part of your community?

Will you offer masks to those who need them?

How will you manage seating to ensure 6 ft. between individuals or family units?

How will you welcome people who arrive over your Maximum **Physical Distance** Number?

Will you offer more services? If so, how will you accomplish this?

Will you provide overflow streaming of the service in your parish hall?

How can people enter and exit the space and maintain **Physical Distancing**?

Will you establish one-way traffic in and out of the church?

B. Outdoor Worship

Outdoor worship may happen at the earliest date that churches are released into NY State Re-Opening Phase IV as long as the outdoor space will accommodate proper **physical distancing** and a **written plan** has been developed to ensure all aspects of the liturgy comply with safe use of materials and resources.

C. Children and Youth

Nursery, Sunday School, and Youth programs should be among the last programs to restart at churches.

What is the maximum capacity for each room to be used?

What is the maximum **physical distancing** capacity for these rooms?

What disinfecting protocol will be implemented in rooms used for these programs?

What changes to the layout or contents of the rooms are planned to ensure proper **physical distancing** and cleanliness?

What procedures will be implemented to check signs and symptoms of volunteers and children upon arrival?

How will you record and maintain records for contact tracing purposes?

D. Singing –

The projection of air from the lungs during singing has been identified as putting many more virus particles in a room which also remain in the air longer.

NO SINGING will be allowed for the foreseeable future.

A single cantor may perform with 20 ft. between that person and the nearest other person.

Consider use of your organ or keyboard for instrumental music or recorded music.

Remember that our musicians depend on us for income.

E. Sanitizing the Church

Have you inspected the church building for standing water and mold or other hazards?

What is your plan to sanitize common areas of the church before and after each use?

What areas will you close off to avoid putting people in close proximity?

What is your plan to sanitize between multiple services?

What is your plan about sanitizing pews? If there are pads, will you remove them?

F. Frequently handled materials (Hymnals, Prayer Books, Offering Plates, Pens, Guest Books, Literature, etc.)

Where will you store them so as not to be a temptation?

How will you replace these items in order to conduct your liturgy?

How will you organize the one-time use of paper bulletins?

How will you collect offerings to avoid contact between people?

Will you encourage online giving, bank payment, or mail?

How will offering counters prepare to handle the offerings and sanitize after?

G. Personal Protection

You may want to obtain a surface thermometer to check the temperature of persons who are not feeling well.

Where will you provide sanitizer for parishioners?

Where will you have face masks and gloves available for those who need them?

Who will be recording the names and contact information of persons attending?

How will contact tracing information be stored in the church?

If multiple people use a single microphone, how will you control its cleanliness and use?

If you provide hearing devices how will you sanitize them before and after use?

II. PASTORAL EVENTS

Currently **Weddings and Funerals** will be allowed preferably outdoors for groups of up to 10 persons as long as all protocols enumerated in the NY State guidance and the individual parish plan are observed.

III. GATHERINGS AND MEETINGS

Social gatherings and Coffee Hour must not take place at this time.
Small meetings of up to ten persons may take place with the same precautions as worship. Attendees must be given the option of attending remotely.

What is the maximum seating capacity for the meeting room?

What is the maximum seating capacity of this room with **physical distancing**?

Who will be responsible for contact tracing information for these meetings?

How will this information be compiled and stored at the church?

Where will hand sanitizer and masks be located for attendees?

Who will be responsible for sanitizing the room before and after?

IV. CHURCH OFFICE

To the extent possible, work should continue to be performed remotely. Clergy, staff, and volunteers should not come to the building if they are unwell or have COVID-19 symptoms. Clergy, staff, and volunteers will be responsible to sanitize their own work area **before and after** their time there.

Where will sanitizer and other necessary materials be located for ease of use?

What is your plan for **physical distancing** of clergy, staff, and volunteers in the work area?

How will clergy, staff, and volunteers track their time in the office/sanctuary and note any contact with others during these times for potential contact tracing?

V. TENANTS

Tenants must be asked to agree to abide by the established protocols for cleaning and physical distancing. They should be asked to develop their own **written plan** in concert with NY State guidelines and your parish plan. Vestry Approval of their document is required.

VI. COMMUNICATION

Appropriate questions to verbally ask persons entering a service:
Have you had COVID-19 symptoms in the past 14 days?
Have you had a positive COVID-19 test in the past 14 days?
Have you had close contact with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 cases in the past 14 days?

How will you communicate these protocols to your congregation?

How will you remind parishioners to stay away if they are unwell or have COVID symptoms?

How will you train your staff and/or volunteers around all these new procedures?

How will you provide remote access for those who are unable or choose not to attend?

Where will informational posters about COVID-19 be displayed in the church?

What is the plan to reach out to and know the needs of all parishioners?

How will you stay in touch with information from your Local Health Department?

Resources

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/social-media-toolkit.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html>

<https://forward.ny.gov/metrics-guide-reopening-new-york>

<https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/governor.ny.gov/files/atoms/files/ReligiousandFuneralServicesSummaryGuidance.pdf>*

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