

## **Guidelines on Re-Gathering for Worship -- The Episcopal Diocese of Southern Virginia**

- Assuring 6-foot social distancing (36 square feet per person or family). This will most likely limit the number of worshipers allowed in the building at one time.
- Establishing, where possible, patterns for the directional flow of participants entering, exiting, or moving about in the worship space to assure that social distancing is maintained to the full extent possible, and where possible, establish separate doors for entry and exit.
- Removing all Prayer Books, Hymnals, and Bibles from the pews. Additionally, pew cushions and portable cloth kneelers should be removed temporarily.
- Encouraging worshipers to bring personal Prayer Books from home, if available.
- Discontinuing use of the holy water font.
- Establishing hand sanitizer stations and, where possible, hand washing stations near entrances and exits.
- Suspending the use of alms basins and providing a touch-free method for the collection of offerings.
- Postponing congregational and choral singing for in-person worship. A small number of instrumental musicians, not to include woodwinds and brass, is permissible, provided 6-foot social distancing is maintained. Use of singers during Phase One is permissible only for live-streaming and recording for use in virtual services and only so long as social distancing protocols are followed and fresh air ventilation is employed.
- Discontinuing the physical passing of the peace.
- Requiring, in accordance with the order of the governor, that all worship participants wear face masks covering the nose and mouth. Masks may be removed for specific aspects of worship (to read Scripture, to preach or address the congregation, or to receive communion, if offered).
- Developing a plan for dismissal of congregants in an orderly way that maintains social distance.
- Planning for thorough cleaning and sanitizing of all public spaces before services and in-between services if multiple services are anticipated.
- Considering, when possible, the use of outdoor spaces for services. Outdoor worship, where possible, limits use of enclosed spaces, thereby mitigating the risk of virus transmission. Even so, social distancing and the wearing of face masks are required at outdoor services.
- Recommending the wearing of gloves, if indicated, with appropriate instruction about proper wear and disposal of gloves.
- Developing and implementing a plan to educate the congregation about expectations of all who attend public worship, practices which each participant must observe, and the differences worshipers will encounter as they re-gather, to include the wearing of masks, following of protocols, abstinence from singing or exchanging the peace, and the like. Additionally, this education plan must make clear that no one should seek to attend worship if they are feeling unwell or are experiencing any symptom or symptoms associated with COVID-19.
- Posting signage stating that no one with a fever or symptoms of COVID-19 or who has known exposure to COVID-19 in the prior 14 days is permitted to participate.

- Posting signage regarding the mandatory observance of CDC and Virginia Department of Health public health standards including the wearing of face masks, 6-foot social distancing, and not attending if ill or symptomatic.
- Tracking the number of persons present in person or virtually for worship.
- Recognizing that during Phase 1, the safest option for worship is either Morning or Evening Prayer or the Celebration of the Eucharist with the administration of spiritual communion, some congregations may include plans for the physical distribution of communion.
- Continued suspension of in-person coffee hours.
- Continued provision of virtual services.
- Offering adult Christian formation by virtual means only.
- Offering of children's worship, Vacation Bible School, or other children's programming by virtual means only.
- Assuring that all nurseries remain closed.
- Cancelling or postponing all mission trips, pilgrimages, etc.
- Addressing the needs and concerns of other groups seeking to use the facilities, including AA groups, Scouts, day schools, etc., as necessary and appropriate. Serious consideration should be given to limiting or eliminating availability of the church facility for use by such groups, but if the decision is made to permit limited use of the building, outside groups should be required to observe the same standards employed by members of the congregation: wearing face masks at all times, maintaining 6-foot social distancing, not attending if ill or symptomatic, complying with all applicable CDC and Virginia Department of Health guidelines, and sanitizing any spaces used both before and after usage.
- Planning carefully to offer support services through existing food pantries and services to the homeless in a manner that safeguards the health of all and mitigates the risk of virus transmission.