



The Episcopal Diocese of Long Island

BROOKLYN • QUEENS • NASSAU • SUFFOLK

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

As we approach the Thanksgiving holiday and the start of the Advent Season, I want to express to you my abiding love and gratitude for the ministry that is yours and mine in this wonderful diocese.

I know that with the rise in reported COVID-19 cases in the diocese, we are remembering the hardship of this past March and April and the months that followed with the isolation and separation from loved ones and our worshiping communities.

As we enter this next phase of living with this pandemic, I am asking you to prayerfully and faithfully endure a little longer. **At this date I am not directing the suspension of in-person liturgies, but I am reminding you all that no congregation must engage in-person worship anywhere in the diocese during this pandemic.**

I would like to remind you of some of the basic guidelines that have been developed from the work of our Task Force. These bullet points serve as my directives to the congregations of the diocese:

- Occupancy is 33% of maximum occupancy allowed in the church itself.
- Clergy must be aware and alert of zone changes in their area. Watch the infection rates in your area/zone as reported by the **state** (not county) a 7-day rolling rate of 3% means that you halt in-person worship. To see the latest status of your location, visit this website: <https://covidhotspotlookup.health.ny.gov/#/home>.
- Liturgies must be less than 60 minutes (it may mean shorter sermons and fewer verses of hymns)
- Be ready to reduce to 25% or possibly to return to online liturgies only
- If not in a hot spot (regardless of yellow, orange or red), it is the sole discretion of the rector or priest-in-charge as to whether or not the church is open for in-person liturgies. This is not debatable.
- Be aware that this is a changing situation. Staying open (or closed) depends on the congregants staying safe during the week. Therefore, request that members of your congregation who travel to worship from other neighborhoods or communities check the status of their own community before traveling to join the congregation in worship.

Parishioners who live in NY State identified cluster zones (orange or red) should not attend worship in person until their home zone is downgraded to yellow.

- Be aware, be alert, be educated: Be aware that numbers are on the rise, be alert of zone changes in your area, be educated on how to keep your parish safe.
- Masks must be worn by all at all times.
- Physical distance must be maintained. No closer than 6-8 feet apart in pews and while standing.
- Hand sanitizer must be openly available and used frequently.
- Contact tracing must be obtained and recorded at every liturgy and event.

My brothers and sisters, if we can adhere to these simple guidelines for a time longer, we will save lives and maintain our ability to gather in our churches for liturgy and other times of prayer.

Please serve as your sister's and brother's keeper in difficult time.

Be well, stay safe, and keep praying. With my admiration, respect and blessings,

I remain, your brother in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "+Larry Provenzano". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'L'.

+Larry Provenzano, Bishop of Long Island