



Check-List for Regathering

Begin by considering your entire church campus including:

- Parking areas
- Offices
- Rest rooms
- Kitchens
- Gardens and grounds
- Storage areas, attics, and basements
- Classrooms and nurseries
- Lobbies, narthexes, and hallways
- Social/parish halls
- Doorways and entry/exit areas
- Worship space(s)
- Meeting rooms and libraries
- Graveyards and columbariums

Questions to Consider:

- How are our buildings compatible with safe practices?
- How will we reduce the size of our gatherings to align with public advice on the limits of safe social distancing?
- Some areas in our building(s) will make social distancing impossible. What areas should be blocked off, barred from use, or locked?
- How can all the spaces be clearly defined to assure social distancing at a minimum of 6 feet?
- What furniture should be moved or removed entirely so there is at least 6 feet separating persons not living in the same household?
- How will you manage times of entering and exiting the building(s) to preserve social distancing?
- Do we know people who can engage in a Regathering Task Force that will define the detailed protocols for what happens from the time someone approaches the facility to the time he or she leaves?

Restrooms

Restroom use is to be limited to allow for social distance. The most thoughtful advice suggests that people be encouraged in advance to come to in-person worship having already used their bathrooms at home.

Signage

Some folks have a good mental picture of six feet; others struggle with that. Use clear, direct signage and heavy-duty tape to remind people about social distancing and help them with spacing.

Kitchens, Pantries and Food Preparation

Kitchens, pantries and food preparation areas are not to be used, except when used for food ministries with all other social distancing protocols followed.

Check-List for Regathering

May 18, 2020

Cleaning and Preparing Physical Spaces for Regathering

Safely regathering will require ongoing intensified cleaning protocols.

- Follow the [Centers for Disease Control](#) guidance to do a deep clean of your regathering space(s).
- Consider training a rotating volunteer crew to meet the need for stronger and more frequent cleaning work.
- Discard old mops and brooms and purchase new ones.
- Use cleaning wipes on all surfaces, with special attention to frequently-touched surfaces such as door knobs and light switches.
- Use each cleaning wipe only once before discarding.
- Ensure that adequate personal hygiene supplies (soap, paper towels, tissues, sanitizer) are readily available throughout your buildings.
- Verify that sextons and custodians have been trained in intensified cleaning procedures. Be sure they are fully equipped with approved cleaning products, rubber gloves, hand sanitizer, and that all wear masks while cleaning.
- Box up and store away prayer books, hymnals, and tract racks; any parish libraries that are not housed in a separate, lockable space must also be stored away.

Office and Administrative Procedures

- Develop or extend flexible telework policies
- Update job descriptions to reflect current tasks
- Stagger shifts to limit the number of workers on site at any given time
- Increase space between workspaces/desks; if in the same room, seat staff facing the same way rather than each other
- Consider adding a sneeze guard for staff who do check-ins or handouts
- Require staff to stay home when sick
- Require staff whose household includes a person with any respiratory symptoms or a positive COVID-19 test to self-quarantine according to directions issued by health authorities
- Limit the number of building keys circulating to known persons.

Handling Currency

If working with cash money:

- Wear personal protective gear (gloves and mask)
- Wash your hands thoroughly after completion

Regathered Worship

Full compliance with stated guidelines.

Liturgical Considerations -- Celebration of Holy Eucharist

- Consider using Morning Prayer or the Liturgy of the Word only for the first few Sundays of regathered worship so that people can adjust to the safety restrictions before the higher-risk actions of Holy Communion.
- When the Eucharist is celebrated, the Celebrant shall be the only person at the altar.

Check-List for Regathering

May 18, 2020

- Although a small amount of wine may be consecrated in the chalice, no one shall partake of the wine by the common cup.

A Safe and Possible Scenario for Communion

- The deacon or celebrant prepares the altar, using a normal chalice and paten.
- Hands should be visibly sanitized before and after the altar is set.
- The celebrant prays the Eucharistic Prayer, touching the vessels as the rubrics specify.
- The celebrant refrains from bowing the head low over the elements to avoid bringing their mouth close to the hosts.
 - Arm's length is ideal.
- With guidance from ushers, communicants line up single-file, observing proper distancing.
 - Use tape and/or signs to mark the appropriate distance to keep between people in line.
 - Members of the same household do not need to observe social distancing with one another.
- The celebrant distributes pre-consecrated wafers. If disposable cups are used for wine they may be held on a tray or placed on the communion table.
- After Communion, vessels are handled by a single Altar Guild member.
- Consecrated elements are not reserved.
- The celebrant again disinfects hands.
- The Post-Communion Prayer, Blessing and Dismissal are given.
- Ushers release rows one at a time to insure exits do not become crowded as people depart the sanctuary.
- There is no handshake line at the back of the church.
- Supply hand sanitizer dispensers near the exits and at other high-traffic areas of the church and advise parishioners to use them as they depart.

Pastoral Considerations

People may have great difficulty with social distancing. When we have been apart from loved ones, and experienced the stress and grief of isolation, it's easy to ignore guidelines.

The best help for those who struggle with distancing is by example. Leaders and clergy can show by waves, smiles, peace-signs, bowing with hands together, that we can acknowledge one another's presence without breaking the principle of distancing.

Most every faith community has a few respected pillars who help set the tone and shape congregational culture. Recruit those people to be "overseers".

- Their job is to be present at public worship and monitor conformance with the safety precautions in effect.
- They can do so firmly, kindly and tactfully.
- Help them by creating specific job descriptions that articulate where they are to be, what they will do, and what resources to use.
- Designating them in advance, referring to their ministry as safe-keeping the Body of Christ, enables them to act with authority when necessary.
- [Sidebar note to clergy; it is much better if you do not undertake this role].

Check-List for Regathering

May 18, 2020

These overseers may take the opportunity to privately suggest that people continue to worship virtually if they are unable to observe safe practices for in-person worship because they lack impulse control, are cognitively confused, or seriously emotionally impacted and thus unable to self-regulate.

Some people who have been sustained by hope for “worship back to normal” may be deeply disappointed by the distance restrictions, the absence of singing, the avoidance of hugs and handshakes, and the regimentation of “crowd control”. Nothing will be back to “normal” for quite awhile.

- Expect displaced anger which often masks grief.
- Plan how the clergy and congregation will respond pastorally both in the moment and over time.

Serious mental health issues are predicted and suggest that a significant percentage of people will experience depression, anxiety, PTSD and intractable grief.

- This grief may be heightened when hoped-for experiences (like worship as we have known it) don’t materialize, at least not for some time.
- Train everyone in the congregation to watch for mental health vulnerabilities in themselves and others.
 - Consider regionally sponsoring the program [Mental Health First Aid](#), which trains non-professionals about mental health and substance abuse issues, and equips them to be helpful first-line responders.

Imagine the impact faith communities can have on helping us all find meaning, resolution and hope if we can develop the capacity to truly help each other forward.

Monitoring and Reporting

We ask that Regional Deans help gather insights and learnings from congregational leaders, helping us to learn from one another.

Your bishops and diocesan staff encourage faith communities to continue investing in, practicing, and improving online/virtual worship, fellowship, study and governance.

We encourage small group reflections as people regather:

- How did you move through the many weeks of restricted contact?
- What insights did you gain?
- What was really hard?
- How did you take care of yourself?
- What blessing(s) did you experience?
- How have you changed as a person, leader, and Christian because of this pandemic?
- What needs, priorities and issues do you see going forward?
- What spiritual practices, developed during this time, will you fold into your daily life moving forward as a follower of Jesus Christ?
- This pandemic has exposed layers of injustice. How might you (your faith community) respond?