



The Anglican Diocese of the Great Lakes
3810 Ridgewood Road, Copley, OH 44321

Guidelines for initial re-opening of in-person meetings in church during Covid-time

Even after State governments allow churches to meet, churches should consider offering online or drive-in options as an alternative to face to face meetings.

In any face to face meetings, numbers of worshipers or attendees should be kept to a minimum depending on available space. In order to keep numbers low, churches should consider multiple services.

CDC guidelines recommend that States not open up until there has been a decline in the rate of infections in a given area for at least two weeks. Not all States have been observing these guidelines, but churches would be wise to follow them.

Those who should not attend services:

Communicating that some should not attend should be done with sensitivity since the exclusion of any group from worship may give the impression of there being first and second class Christians. Online services should be offered as an option for those who cannot attend and, with care, the Sacrament could be delivered to the homes of those unable to be present (see below). Persons of high risk should be encouraged to participate in services online from their home.

Anyone who feels ill should not attend, especially anyone with a fever or a cough.

Anyone with a high risk of disease should not attend, especially anyone who is immuno-compromised.

Those over the age of 65 should consider not attending.

Upon entering the church:

Hand washing facilities should be available at each entrance and everyone entering should be encouraged to make use of these facilities.

Any greeters at the door of the church should be masked, should give clear instructions about social distancing, and should ensure that door handles are kept sanitized.

Staggering arrivals would allow for more social distancing.

It would be wise for attendees to wear face masks.

Those attending worship or any other meeting should be spaced at least six feet apart (family groups may, of course, stay together). In order to facilitate this spacing pews should be roped off or chairs arranged to facilitate social distancing.

Any material items that can pass from hand to hand should be avoided. Therefore please do not use bulletins, hymn books, prayer books or Bibles. Encourage people to bring their own or use projection.

There is a high level of danger of spreading viral particles in restrooms, especially by the flushing of toilets. People should be encouraged to avoid the use of restrooms if possible. If restroom facilities are used there should be only one person in the room at a time. Restrooms should be washed frequently.

Ideally, pews or rows of seats should each have hand sanitizer available.

During the service:

Singing can spread more viral particles a longer distance than talking. Congregational singing and choirs, therefore, should be suspended at early stages of re-opening. Participation in musical or poetic forms of worship can be done in alternative ways. In place of hymns the reading of Canticles, Psalms or hymnic portions of scripture is an option. Playing recorded music is another option. Singing by a soloist who is careful to keep at least 12 feet distant from anyone else is also possible.

Microphones should not be shared or should be wiped with a disinfectant wipe before used by a second person.

Books and liturgical materials used by leaders of worship should not be shared.

The passing of the peace can involve no physical contact like hand shaking or hugging. One option would be to encourage the congregation to take a few moments to look at worshipers near them and offer prayer for their neighbors during a short time of silence.

Passing offering plates should be suspended. People could be encouraged to give online or send their offering by mail (those opening envelopes in the church office should be careful to wash hands after touching anything coming in from outside). A basket for a 'retiring offering' could be made available but, once again, those handling envelopes, checks or cash should wash hands immediately afterwards.

The duration of the service should be kept as brief as possible to limit possible exposure.

Prayer teams should be suspended unless they can be arranged without physical contact. One option, for example, would be to have prayer teams in cars in the parking lot with a phone number visibly

displayed in the window. Anyone wanting prayer could drive up to the prayer team's car, phone them and pray together over the phone.

Sunday school or other childrens' activities may require more personal supervision, and more space (for distancing) than has been done in the past. Parents could be encouraged too keep their children with them in church during the pandemic. Times with groups of children should be kept short and hand washing should be encouraged.

During the Eucharist:

If Holy Communion is being celebrated, great care must be taken to ensure non-transmission of viral particles. The following are suggested:

The person setting the table should avoid touching the Eucharistic bread if possible.

The celebrant should thoroughly wash his or her hands immediately before the consecration. (This may involve a slight pause in the service while the priest retires to a place where there is soap and water, or could involve a through washing with hand sanitizer.)

The Eucharistic bread should remain covered by a purificator while the priest says the Eucharistic prayer.

Communion should be distributed in one kind. The priest presiding should also take a small amount of wine in the chalice, but wine should not be shared.

People lining up to receive Communion should maintain social distancing.

The wafer should be dropped into the communicant's hands – not on the tongue and not pressed into the palm.

The prayer for Spiritual Communion could be used in addition to distribution since there may be those who would rather not receive the elements at this time, or for those worshipping online.

After the service

Staggering leaving times should be encouraged.

The congregation should be reminded not to shake hands or hug one another.

Sharing of coffee or food should be suspended.

The sanctuary should be disinfected after each use.

Great care should be taken in distributing Holy Communion to those who are not able to attend the service and wish to receive. Those in this category should have been participants in an online service

so that they are spiritually prepared to receive. The hosts to be delivered should be placed in a plastic baggie by someone who has sanitized their hands thoroughly. The person delivering the sacrament should take a sufficient number off baggies with hosts to the household receiving Communion. The persons delivering the host should not touch the host,, but hand it off at the door. There should not be prolonged visiting between the Eucharistic minister and any receiving, but it would certainly be important that prayers be said while social distancing is maintained.

Grant LeMarquand