

WORSHIPS SAFE



DIRECTIVES CONCERNING
CATHOLIC CHURCH OPERATIONS
IN THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO

PANDEMIC AND EPIDEMIC
EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

**Addendum to WorshipSafe Directives
Concerning COVID-19**

JULY, 2021

**THIS ADDENDUM SUPERSEDES AND REPLACES PROVISIONS
OF THE WORSHIPS SAFE DECEMBER, 2020 UPDATED
MANUAL AS IT RELATES TO COVID-19**

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INTRODUCTION

Recent pronouncements by the Province have seen a lessening of measures as adult Ontarians become vaccinated. This trend will likely increase over the balance of the year and the ACBO, in consultation with its medical and legal consultants, have determined that some measures thought previously necessary for the safe operation of our Churches and facilities can now be relaxed.

It appears that the aerosol transmission (ie. by breath) is the most common means of transporting the infection.

Advice of provincial authorities remains that the most effective ways of dealing with aerosol transmission are:

1. Continue wearing masks;
2. Ventilate the air frequently and effectively in interior spaces, if possible; and,
3. Maintain reduced numbers of people in contained spaces with ongoing physical distancing.

These guidelines then are exclusively about COVID-19 as we enter into varying stages of downgrading the COVID-19 threat.

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CHAPTER ONE: UNDERSTANDING COVID-19

Infectious contagions that have the potential to become local epidemics and then pandemics are ALL human to human transmission. This can be either through direct or indirect contact or by airborne transmission from an infected individual to a susceptible one who has no immunity to the infection.

While transmission may still result from contact or airborne droplets, the most likely way in which COVID-19 is transmitted is by airborne (aerosol) means.

Airborne (Aerosol):

Aerosol transmission occurs when a susceptible person inhales microscopic particles that are much smaller than droplets, and that consist of residual solid components of evaporated respiratory droplets. These “dehydrated” droplets containing infectious agents may remain airborne for hours and travel long distances.

Science now believes that COVID-19 is transmitted by aerosols in a similar way that other contagious infections such as tuberculosis, measles or chickenpox are transmitted. This explains phenomena such as “super spreader” events that have led to large numbers of infectious outbreaks of COVID-19 inside buildings.

Symptoms and Signs Associated with COVID-19 Infections

The primary sign of COVID-19 infection is fever, defined as a core temperature of 37.8 degrees Celsius (100 Fahrenheit) or higher taken with an oral or rectal thermometer (equivalent to 37.5 C or 99.5 F taken with a non-contact forehead infrared thermometer).

Though fever arises only half the time at the onset of COVID-19, over 80% of patients will manifest one before the infection has run its course, The following table represents the main signs and symptoms of COVID-19 (frequency of occurrence in brackets based on several studies of hospitalized patients).

- Fever (83 – 99%)
- Cough (59 – 82%)
- Severe Fatigue (44 – 70%)
- Loss of Appetite (40 – 84%)
- Shortness of Breath (31 – 40%)
- Sputum production (28 – 33%)
- Muscle Aching (11 – 56%)

Less common but potentially important additional symptoms include: loss of taste or smell, chills with prolonged shakes, headache, confusion, runny nose and sore throat.

When to Seek Medical Care

It can be difficult to distinguish between the symptoms of common cold, influenza and coronavirus infections, and it is wise not to try to make this determination at home. Especially for those whose occupation involves extensive interaction with the public, seeking advice from your medical practitioner and obtaining testing for active disease is recommended to determine whether symptoms above are due to COVID-19 infection. In the absence of this advice and testing, self-quarantine is strongly recommended for a minimum of 14 days after development of symptoms.

Challenges to Control COVID-19

COVID-19 may be transmitted from individuals who are asymptomatic (never develop any symptoms) or pre-symptomatic (develop symptoms within a few days after acquiring and transmitting it). This has made quarantining less effective as it can only be applied to those with positive testing and/or symptoms. Testing for carriage of live virus to identify those who are contagious may be effected through private or public health care facilities. Rapid antigen test kits are increasingly available, even for personal / home use but carry higher rates of false positive and false negative test results. PCR that identifies the presence of virus in a nasal swab is more accurate but requires special laboratory facilities. These tests remain useful for confirmation of COVID-19 as the cause of symptoms in those who are symptomatic.

Though our focus may change to aerosol transmission, we note that the following measures should still be taken to eliminate viral and bacterial disease through these common sense rules for daily living:

- Wash your hands regularly
- Wash your clothing regularly
- Avoid touching your face or anyone else
- Avoid travel to known contaminated areas
- Avoid contact with people known to be sick
- Seek medical attention if you are sick and follow medical advice
- Maintain appropriate distance from others
- If advised, wear personal protective equipment (PPE)
- If you feel ill or display symptoms of viral or bacterial infections, seek medical assistance and testing to ensure that you are fit for your duties.

CHAPTER TWO: PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

We simply remind clergy that they are the leaders of our faith community, and it is through them that our church members take much direction. It is the responsibility of every bishop, priest, deacon, professed religious and layperson to ensure that a welcome and safe environment exists that allows for the faithful to assemble in our churches and related facilities. Only by visibly demonstrating the commitments to safety outlined in this manual can we send a message that we have taken the risks related to the pandemic seriously and acted reasonably and responsibly to mitigate them.

This means a consistent and leadership role for clergy to demonstrate compliance and complete regard for the health of their people through conducting services in a way that promotes the well-being of all who attend an Ontario church.

CHAPTER THREE: GOVERNMENT NOTICES AND ORDERS

Government orders concerning opening and closing of businesses and public institutions such as churches and church facilities must be observed and obeyed.

The necessity of compliance must be enforced now more than ever given the fact that the record of the past 16 months have shown that conditions change rapidly and new variations of the COVID-19 virus mutate and make themselves known.

Nothing in this addendum should be construed as over-riding the lawful order of public authorities, be they federal, provincial or municipal.

The ACBO will monitor government directives and will ascertain their application to religious facilities and will communicate the same to each member diocese.

Should any public authority request that a church facility be closed due to health and safety concerns, such an order should be complied with and immediately reported to the diocesan bishop or administrator.

On no account should any public comment be made concerning an order made by a public authority. Directives of public health officials, police and others in authority should be complied with without argument. Any enquiries concerning the appropriateness of any action should be addressed by the diocesan office of the bishop.

CHAPTER FOUR: PERSONAL AND COMMUNITY HYGIENE, PPE, VACCINATIONS AND TEMPERATURE MONITORING, RESPONDING TO ILLNESS SITUATIONS

Community Hygiene

Parishioners are to be advised that anyone experiencing an elevated temperature or other flu symptoms must refrain from coming to church.

Persons whose health is compromised in any way should refrain from coming to church for any activities during the pandemic.

Personal Temperature and other Health Indications

Most viral pandemics involve fever, it being the body's reaction to fighting off infection. Self-monitoring of temperature and those of other persons involved in public celebrations, including all liturgical ministers, should take place prior to each event.

In addition to temperature, other potential symptoms of viral contagion include:

- coughing and wheezing
- fatigue
- loss of appetite
- shortage of breath
- excessive sputum
- aching muscles.

Less prevalent, but still concerning include:

- headaches, chills, confusion, runny nose, shaking.

A combination of any or all of the above and a fever gives a strong inference to an underlying illness of which anyone should be concerned.

Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Masks are the most effective way of reducing the potential for aerosol transmission of COVID-19 and until health authorities dictate otherwise they shall continue to be worn at church services and celebrations. The wearing of gloves is no longer considered essential PPE in public. The use of barriers such as plastic screens may continue if already in place.

Persons with Exemptions from Wearing Masks

Children under the age of two are not required to wear masks.

Persons may be exempted by their physician/psychologist or other health-care provider from wearing masks. The mandating of mask wearing by others presents an obvious inconsistency in appearance by those who do not wear masks. The dislike of wearing masks, age or other non-medical condition is insufficient for the purpose of being exempted from wearing masks while attending at Mass or any other service.

As a private entity and out of concern for the safety of those attending Church, a parish priest is entitled to seek verification of mask exemptions. The priest should generally invite those with valid exemptions to advise him or register as such with the parish so that proper arrangements can be made for them.

Those without proper exemptions should be told to wear a mask and masks should be made available to them. Those with valid exemptions should show the priest a note from a qualified physician or psychologist attesting to their condition. They should be seated in an area where easy access to them for communion may take place. The priest or extraordinary minister should bring them Communion and they should be asked to wear a mask only for the brief period of receiving Communion putting on a mask to receive Holy Communion, removing same to consume communion. This exercise is only intended to last a few seconds at most and is requested so as to protect both the parishioner and the priest/extraordinary minister of Communion.

Where there is strict impossibility to wear a mask, arrangements for Communion should be made with the parish priest so that a safe means of distribution can be ensured.

Those with exemptions should be encouraged to strictly maintain social distancing at all times.

Vaccinations

The advent of vaccinations in Canada beginning in early 2021 will hopefully lead to the herd immunity necessary to contain the ongoing contagion of COVID-19. Church members should be encouraged to obtain their vaccinations. We are not yet ready to distinguish between vaccinated and non-vaccinated or partially vaccinated persons within our churches. We must presume that some or all of each congregation is not vaccinated and take measures to protect them.

As more of the population becomes vaccinated, the ACBO will issue further bulletins on the practical effect of COVID-19 containment.

Responding to Illness Situations

Public Health Ontario (www.publichealthontario.ca) provides a useful assessment for viral infection. Those who are concerned about their health should visit this website and take the self-assessment provided, and if required, follow the steps outlined.

Clergy and staff who exhibit any of the signs associated with COVID-19 (see Chapter One); that is, a fever (>37.8 C oral or >37.5 C forehead) or ANY compatible symptoms, or who believe that they have been exposed to COVID-19 must immediately notify the chancery office or bishop and seek immediate medical assessment and treatment, taking care to isolate themselves from others pending a confirmed diagnosis. Similarly, volunteers and liturgical ministers who exhibit such conditions or find themselves in such circumstances must, as soon as practicable, notify their parish priest, who will in turn notify the chancery office or bishop for directions.

Under no circumstances should anyone with present but undiagnosed symptoms awaiting test verification attend a church or have contact with other people until a diagnosis is confirmed.

The Celebrant and all others exercising ministries during the Mass (or any other Sacraments) must undergo a temperature check prior to entering the church. If the individual's temperature is

at or above (>37.8 C oral or >37.5 C forehead) or they show ANY compatible symptoms, they must not enter the church and are asked to seek medical help. (All priests should self-administer a temperature check and record their temperature prior to entering the church for Mass. If the priest has an elevated temperature, he must not celebrate public Mass).

Parishioners are asked to self-screen before attending church, including taking their temperature. Those with a temperature above 37.5 C are asked to not attend Mass. Those who exhibit fever or any other indications of a viral infections are asked to seek medical attention before coming to church.

Should anyone present become ill during Mass, that is, the celebrant, those assisting with the Mass, and parishioners, they should be asked to leave and seek medical assistance. Anyone who might attend to the ill person must wear disposable gloves and a protective mask, and should further wash thoroughly after any contact, even if gloves and a mask are worn.

Positive tests in clergy should be immediately communicated to the chancery office or bishop so that alternate arrangements for staffing can be made.

Infected clergy or staff who have been in contact with others within the immediate two-week period must report their situation to the regional health officials. Detailed information on what test results mean has been included at *Appendix 'C' "Testing and Positive/Negative Results"*.

CHAPTER FIVE: BASIC RULES APPLICABLE TO ALL CHURCHES AND PARISH FACILITIES

General Rules

The following rules must be implemented in all Catholic churches, and where applicable, all parish halls and offices where the public may attend.

A. The Universal Application of Physical Distancing

In all cases, when community gatherings take place, or when individuals are using the church or other facilities, a physical two-metres (six feet) distance and employment of the use of masks and appropriate hygienic measures are to be strictly maintained.

This is necessary to avoid:

- personal contact
- breathing in confined spaces absent wearing a mask

B. Cleaning of Churches and Related Facilities

Churches should always be clean and tidy. Research has shown that COVID-19 transmission has predominantly occurred through aerosol means. While it continues to be important to keep church facilities clean, the more rigorous protocols that were earlier recommended can be dispensed with in part.

We recommend that churches be thoroughly cleaned once per week or more often if conditions warrant.

We recommend that pews be wiped once per week with an acceptable cleaning agent that has germicidal qualities but does not harm pews.

Washrooms

Church washrooms may be again opened, but should be cleaned regularly to ensure suppression of virus.

Any washroom that is soiled must be closed pending cleaning with an approved multi surface cleaner/ disinfectant that promotes to killing 99.9% of germs and viruses.

Water Fountains

Water fountains or coolers should continue to be turned off until advice is provided by municipal authorities.

Disinfectant Hand Sanitizer Dispensing Machines

Each church should have a minimum of two of these devices at the entrance and exits doors of the church. It should be recommended to each parishioner that they sanitize their hands before entering the church.

Holy Water Fonts

Holy water fonts are to remain empty until such time as a further direction is issued to allow for their use.

Sacred Vessels

Regular cleaning of sacred vessels may be resumed.

C. Posting of Notices

The following notices should continue to be employed:

- If you feel sick or your temperature is elevated, or you are experiencing any of the following symptoms (see Chapter 4) you are asked to refrain from entering the church.
- You are reminded that if you are sick or your health is compromised, you are not obligated to participate in Sunday Mass.
- Masks properly worn must be in place at all times save for the act of consuming the Host, but only after moving a recommended two metres (six feet) from the Eucharistic Minister dispensing the Host.
- Be sure to follow the guidance of the ushers/ministers of hospitality and sit only in the designated places to ensure physical distancing at all times.

D. Preparing the Church for the Liturgy

Churches should be inspected prior to use to ensure that there are no slip or trip hazards and that all social distancing measures are in good repair and all necessary signs are in place.

General Safety

Church Entrances and Windows and Ventilation

Where possible, weather permitting, it is recommended that the doors and windows of the church should be open to avoid contact with handles and, more importantly, to allow for ventilation.

In view of the role of aerosol transmission of COVID-19, ventilation of closed spaces in which groups of people may gather is very important. Consultation with an HVAC specialist may be considered / required to optimize ventilation in any particular parish.

General ways to improve ventilation include:

- Placement of fans within doors and windows to exhaust air from within the church. Fan placement is important and will vary based on room configuration. Avoid placing fans in a way that could potentially cause contaminated air to flow

directly from one person to another. In larger facilities, other fan systems, such as gable fans and roof ventilators should be utilized if present,

- Increase the introduction of outdoor air by opening outdoor air dampers maximally and if HVAC is present reduce or eliminate air recirculation,
- Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and provide acceptable indoor air quality for the current occupancy level for each space,
- Rebalance or adjust HVAC systems, where present, to increase total airflow to occupied spaces,
- Turn off any demand-controlled ventilation (DCV) controls that reduce air supply based on occupancy or temperature during occupied hours. ie. Set fan to “on” position instead of “auto” in order to operate fans continuously, even when heating or air-conditioning is not required,
- Ensure any air filters are clean, properly sized and within their recommended service life,
- Ensure restroom exhaust fans are functional and operating at full capacity when the building is occupied,
- Inspect and maintain exhaust ventilation systems in areas such as kitchens or cooking areas, etc. Operating these systems continuously will increase overall ventilation within the occupied building,
- Use portable high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) fan / filtration systems to enhance air cleaning if possible,
- Use of ultraviolet germicidal irradiation (UVGI) units as supplemental room air treatment or as an in-duct air cleaner in central ventilation systems may also be considered though this carries higher cost,
- Run the HVAC system at maximum outside airflow for 2 hours before and after the building is occupied.

Hymnals, Prayer Books, Envelopes, Pamphlets, Newspapers

Printed material such as bulletins, pamphlets and newspapers may again be distributed and religious articles may again be sold, though the transactions should involve social distancing.

All hymnals, prayer books and other papers may be replaced in the pews, though restrictions still exist on singing.

Elevators

May be used with social distancing parameters borne in mind.

Seating

Step 3 of the Ontario Provincial re-opening plan allows for churches to have the lesser of 50% of usual occupancy OR the number of persons who can be seated with two metre (six feet) distancing (family groups excluded). To ensure that physical distancing takes place, seating should be staggered in patterns to promote two metre (six feet) distances. Seating patterns should avoid individuals sitting next to an aisle. Seats may be designated by tape markings.

Floors and Aisles

In high traffic areas (entrances and aisles) tape must be used to designate spacing of two metre (six feet) increments and also indicate the direction of movement. The tape should be a bright colour and distinguished from the colour of the floor surface. The tape should be of sufficient quality to remain in place and so that it can be removed or repaired without harm to the surfaces. The tape should be inspected after every Sunday to ensure it is in good condition and remains visible.

Disabled Area

Those who attend church with a personal mobility device should be placed in a designated area with sufficient space to allow a two metre (six feet) space between each person.

Sanctuary

Seating in the sanctuary should be limited and must be arranged to ensure two metres (six feet) distancing.

Sacristy

Entrance to the sacristy is to be limited to those who are required to prepare for the liturgy. Social distancing must be maintained while in the sacristy. If the room is small and does not allow for the required distancing, one person at a time should use the room. All surfaces in the room are to be kept clean.

Crying Rooms and Small Chapels/Devotional Areas

Unless it is possible to ensure two metres (six feet) distancing, crying rooms are to be closed.

Overflow Crowds and Standing Room

This is to be discouraged unless there is sufficient space to allow for distancing and for aisles to be clear so that traffic is not impeded.

Washrooms

Washrooms should be regularly cleaned and disinfected. A sanitizing fluid device (preferably touchless) should be placed outside each washroom.

Meeting Rooms

All adjacent meeting rooms may be used if appropriate distancing.

Church Halls

Church/parish halls may be re-opened in accordance with Provincial and Municipal directions. Check with your municipality to ascertain capacity rules and any other requirements.

Confessionals and Reconciliation Chapels

Reconciliation chapels are the preferred venue for the sacrament of reconciliation, and these may be used as long as masks are worn. No screen is necessary.

If a confessional is to be used, both the priest and penitent should wear masks. Priests should employ double masking or use the N95 mask so as to further lower the risk of contamination.

Supervision

Churches should never be left open unsupervised. Compliance with physical distancing should be enforced by an attendant in charge. Any refusal to comply should be reported to the pastor or member of the pastoral staff.

Capacity Control

As churches are permitted to reopen but physical distancing continues to be required, some churches will face the challenge of determining who can attend Mass and how to regulate the numbers.

The regular capacity of your church will dictate the need to employ a reservation system. If you know that a certain number of people will generally turn up at a particular service, you need not make any elaborate system. If not you may revert to the systems you have previously been using.

Contact Tracing

It is mandatory that each parish maintain a list of all attending parishioners including their contact information. Such lists shall be placed with parish financial records and maintained for a period of not less than six years, or unless directed otherwise by the Diocese. It will not however be necessary to have people indicate their seating place.

CHAPTER SIX: CELEBRATION OF SUNDAY MASS

The Assembly

All in the assembly must wear a mask upon the recommendation of the Ontario Medical Officer of Health.

The numbers of persons permitted to attend Mass may be limited or fixed by Governmental authorities.

The Diocesan Bishop should ascertain measures in effect in his Diocese and see that all priests are familiar with these guidelines and that they are observed through periodic inspections and/or surveys.

Ministers of Hospitality

It is no longer necessary for Ushers or ministers of hospitality to direct people to the hand sanitizers.

If the Church remains with limited capacity, it is recommended that a booking or reservation system be maintained to ensure that those attending obtain seating in an orderly fashion, and Ushers may continue to direct people to their seats.

Altar Servers

Altar Servers may again be used providing that they maintain a two metre (six feet) distance and be fully masked.

Prayers before Mass

Where it is the custom for the people to pray the Rosary or other devotional prayers before Mass, this practice may continue.

Parish Team Requirements

The priest celebrating Mass must wear a mask during the processional, recessional and when distributing Holy Communion or at any time when he is less than two metres (six feet) from any person.

Deacons, if they participate in the Mass, must respect social distancing and must also wear masks at all times when not speaking.

Lectors and any other participating lay ministers or servers must wear a mask at all times save if they are doing one of the readings, in which case they may remove the mask to speak as long as they are at least three metres (ten feet) from the assembly or others.

Communion may be taken regularly as long as the distributor wears a mask and the receiver wears the mask to the point of receiving, removes it, receives and consumes and returns to his seat.

Extraordinary Ministers of Communion must receive their communion while masked, and must retreat from the priest no less than two metres (six feet) to remove their mask and receive Communion, and then move forward again with mask on to receive the ciborium from the priest to distribute communion.

Music During Mass

Unfortunately, singing is a major way in which moist particulate is pushed out of the body through breathing and the projecting of one's voice. **Parishioners attending at Mass shall be advised to not sing on account of the potential spreading of airborne contagion.**

A cantor (accompanied by a single instrumentalist) may sing at Mass as long as the cantor is a minimum of three metres (ten feet) distant from anyone else while singing.

In a church where physical distancing can be ensured between choir members, then such a choir is possible but only if the choir members are a minimum of three metres (ten feet) from one another and any other person in the Church.

Entrance Procession

Processions may be again conducted in the regular fashion provided everyone in the processional wears a mask and is distanced by at least two metres (six feet).

The Introductory Rites

The priest leads the Introductory Rites in the usual manner from the chair. The presiding celebrant must use a simple lectern for the prayers rather than have a server hold the book. If a priest is to be within two metres (six feet) of a server or any other lay minister or volunteer, masks must be worn by the priest, the server and any lay minister/volunteer.

Liturgy of the Word

The Liturgy of the Word takes place in the usual manner. Masks may be removed for any reading or speaking part of the Mass as long as a three metres (ten feet) distancing is observed.

The Creed is professed and the Prayers of the Faithful are offered. The petitions may be announced by the priest at the chair.

Children's Liturgy of the Word

The celebration of the Children's Liturgy of the Word is again permitted.

Offertory

Collection may proceed as per usual, with collection plates or baskets, and with ushers wearing masks as is appropriate.

Credence Table

Where altar servers are not available, a Credence Table may be used as per the direction below:

The bread and wine are placed on the credence table near the altar before Mass. If the credence table is placed beside the altar, there is no need for a server to assist at the altar. If a server is involved, both the Priest and the server must wear masks when within two metres (six feet) of one another.

Vessels on the Altar

It is recommended, where possible, to place the ciboria containing hosts for the assembly at some distance from the priest's chalice and paten. If the ciboria have covers, these may remain in place during the Eucharistic Prayer.

Eucharistic Prayer

The Eucharistic Prayer is prayed by the priest with the assembly making the usual responses and acclamations.

Communion Rite

The Greeting of Peace is maintained; however, no sign such as shaking hands is permitted during the pandemic. A simple bow of the head towards one's neighbour may be offered as a sign of peace.

Holy Communion is distributed by the priest and extraordinary ministers of Communion. All Eucharistic ministers are to sanitize their hands before distributing the Eucharist.

All priests and Extraordinary Eucharistic Ministers must wear masks when receiving the ciborium and distributing Holy Communion.

Concelebrants are to receive Holy Communion by intinction and the principal celebrant (or the last to receive) consumes the Precious Blood directly from the chalice. If the number of concelebrants is small, and there are sufficient chalices, then each concelebrant should use an individual separate chalice. The Deacon, at this time, does not receive from the chalice.

Procedure for Distribution of Holy Communion

Prior to distribution of Holy Communion, the Priest should remind the assembly of the procedures for distributing and receiving Holy Communion in accordance with these guidelines. A suggested means of addressing the assembly is as follows:

“To receive Holy Communion, please come forward maintaining the two metres (six feet) distance between one another, to the place marked at the end of the aisle. Then, after “The Body of Christ”, and “Amen”, step forward and the priest or extraordinary minister of Communion will place the Host in your hand, or on the tongue as preferred. Then move to one of the places marked on either side, and withdrawing your mask, receive Our Lord.”

Ushers need to direct people to the Minister of Communion to ensure physical distancing and the wearing of masks. Depending on the layout of the church, it may be necessary to distribute Holy Communion to one section at a time so that distance is maintained when people are both coming forward to receive and when they are returning to their seats. Pastors will need to train the ushers beforehand and a simple announcement will need to be made until people are used to this new procedure for the Communion procession.

Distribution involves communicants queuing to receive Holy Communion being directed by ushers to a place two metres (six feet) from the person distributing Holy Communion. At this point the person distributing shall say to the communicant “the body of Christ”, to which the recipient responds “Amen”. Then, without removing their mask, the recipient shall approach the person distributing and have the Host placed in their hands (one hand placed reverently upon the other). On receiving the Host, the recipient shall move to an area designated approximately two metres (six feet) from the point of distribution, and the same distance from any other communicant. There they shall briefly remove their mask and consume the Host, before returning to their designated pew.

It is recommended that marking tape be placed on the floor to indicate the various places where queuing to receive and receiving Holy Communion are to take place so as to assist the ushers in providing direction.

Communion on the tongue is still not to be provided.

Communion vessels may be washed in the usual fashion.

Communion to the Sick and Homebound

The pyxes which have been prepared with hosts are placed on the credence table before Mass. After the Prayer after Communion, they are presented to the ministers who will bring Holy Communion to the sick and homebound.

Again, both priest and minister should be masked. When giving the Eucharist, they are to observe the same procedures (ie., hand washing) as when distributing Communion during Mass.

Concluding Rites

The concluding rites take place in the usual manner.

CHAPTER SEVEN: OTHER RITES CELEBRATED IN THE CHURCH

Since these rites take place in the church, the requirements restricting the number of attendees, for preparing the space, physical distancing, the use of music and procedures for liturgical ministers as they apply to the particular rite are to be observed.

Baptism

The baptism of infants and young children are celebrated in the usual manner. In order to respect physical distancing and limit the number of participants, it is recommended that baptisms not be celebrated during Mass at this time. Nor are they to be celebrated communally, i.e., with several families at a time. With the exception of maintaining physical distancing among family and friends, and the wearing of masks by all present, including the priest or deacon, the priest or deacon sanitizing his hands before and after the pouring of water and anointing, the Sacrament of Baptism is celebrated in the usual manner according to the Rite of Baptism. The water in the font is to be replaced after each baptism.

Christian Initiation of Adults

The Christian Initiation of Adults (including children of catechetical age) is celebrated during Mass, since the rite includes the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist. The Reception into Full Communion is also to be celebrated during Mass. It is recommended that these rites not take place at this time during the Sunday Mass.

Marriage

Marriages may be celebrated with small communities, according to the number of people permitted by health authorities. The norms for physical distancing and wearing masks pertain to all present with the exception of the bride and groom.

Reconciliation

Opportunities for the celebration of Reconciliation are to be posted for the faithful. For those waiting to celebrate the sacrament, social distancing and the wearing of masks must be observed.

Funerals

Funeral Masses may be celebrated in the church, according to the number of people permitted by health authorities. Priests and deacons will collaborate with Funeral Home staff to take all the necessary precautions to ensure the health and safety of all who participate.

First Communion and Confirmation

The scheduling of First Communion and Confirmation for children is the responsibility of the local parish and the bishop's office. The norms for celebrating Sunday Mass apply to these celebrations.

CHAPTER EIGHT: A NEW WAY OF WORKING: STAFF AT PARISH/DIOCESAN OFFICES

In addition to the recommendations outlined below, pastors (and those designated for planning the re-opening of the parish/diocesan office) should consult the Ontario Ministry of Labour Workplace Safety & Prevention Services. This website contains the updated *Guidance on Health and Safety for Office Administration and Secretarial Staff during COVID-19*. Furthermore, reference should be made to www.pshsa.ca for a copy of “*Health and Safety Guidance During COVID-19 For Employers of Office Settings*”.

Workplace Environment

Staff are entitled not to be put in dangerous work situations. At no time should staff be exposed to people known to be suffering from a pandemic contagion.

Staff and clergy who are suffering from any diagnosed or suspected pandemic contagion are not to enter the office and should consult the Public Health Ontario website or their physician.

Staff who have been exposed to someone who is a suspected or confirmed sufferer of pandemic contagion are required to obtain a test confirming that they do not have the virus and are not to attend work until they produce such test.

Staff who are performing cleaning roles or who have direct contact with the public should be issued disposable gloves and masks to be worn when carrying out their functions.

Disposable masks and hand sanitizer should be made available to visitors to a parish/diocesan office.

Washrooms may be used by staff and visitors to offices.

All office visits should be made by appointment to ensure that facilities do not become crowded. If the matter can be dealt with by telephone, then personal meetings should be avoided.

Staff should be cautioned about the need for physical distancing and the wearing of masks both by staff and visitors. If staff can productively work from home, such arrangements should be made. Otherwise, facilities such as lunchrooms or break rooms should be divided so as to allow for two metres (six feet) distances between chairs, etc.

Employees who refuse or fail to follow prescribed rules concerning pandemic contagion may be eligible for workplace discipline. Volunteers who refuse or fail to follow such direction shall be suspended from any further volunteer work.

The basic social distancing, floor marking, washroom policies all apply as per the instructions above that pertain to churches.

Temperature/Personal Protective Equipment/Hand Sanitizer/Physical Layout

A notice at the entrance to the office should be posted for visitors which includes the following directives:

- If you feel sick or your temperature is elevated, or you are experiencing any of the following symptoms (see Chapter 4) you are asked to refrain from entering the office.
- Restrictions on admittance should be considered based upon the size of the office. Small offices should be confined to one or two visitors.
- Be sure to maintain a physical two-metres (six-feet) distance at all times; stand and sit only in the designated places.

It is mandatory that both visitors and staff members wear a mask during meetings in the office.

Any staff members who interact with their colleagues or with the public are to be temperature screened before entering the office. Staff should take their temperature at home and if it is above 37.5 C, they should remain at home.

Bottles of hand sanitizer should be left upon each working desk and counter.

Where possible, at each desk or counter where there is to be interaction between staff and office visitors, a plastic screen be erected so as to negate the potential of the spread of airborne viral or bacterial contagion and that masks be worn. Screens should be of dimensions not less than 90 cm x 90 cm (3'x3'), and these may be solid transparent plastic or saran or film wrap stretched out over a frame.

These surfaces and all other surfaces in the office should be wiped with a disinfectant cloth on a regular basis.

Use of office telephones should be restricted to staff use only. If meetings must take place on site, such should be done bearing in mind physical distancing and the wearing of masks and gloves.

CHAPTER NINE: EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

See WorshipSafe Manual.

CHAPTER TEN: COMMUNICATIONS

As our dioceses prepare for expansion of opening both administrative offices and parishes, effective communication will be vital to ensure clergy, staff and the faithful have a clear understanding of our plans, how and when they will be implemented and guidance for supporting one another during these challenging days. Each diocese must ensure that timely and accurate dissemination of information is provided to parishes and employees during the pandemic period.

Consideration may be given to inviting parishioners to return by way of written or telephone invitation.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: INSPECTIONS BY THE DIOCESE/CATHOLIC MUTUAL

In order to provide assurance to the Government that Ontario Catholic churches will be abiding by best practices as are outlined in this manual, your diocese shall, from time to time, conduct inspections on an unannounced basis. Parishes that are non-compliant will be put on an improvement list, and failure on their part will result in the imposition of restrictions pending demonstrable compliance.

In addition, Catholic Mutual, in the course of its regular inspections, has indicated that they too will review parish churches for compliance issues and report to the diocesan office.

WORSHIPS SAFE

Summary Sheets for Ontario Dioceses

NOTE:

1. The three checklists enclosed are summaries of information and are not intended to be a final checklist only. Please read the Diocesan Directives in their entirety.
2. The Celebrant and all deacons, altar servers, ushers, Eucharistic Ministers and any others assisting with the Celebration of the Eucharist or any sacrament are reminded that they must have their temperatures taken prior to entering the church. If an individual has a temperature greater than 37.5 C, the individual must not enter the church.

I - SUMMARY SHEET: ENTRANCE AND EXITING THE CHURCH/SEATING PEOPLE

Ushers

- o All must wear masks.
- o An Usher captain should be designated at each Mass to ensure that all tasks are reviewed and performed.

Prior to Mass

- o The Celebrant, and all liturgical ministers must have their temperature taken prior to entering the church. If an individual has a temperature greater than 37.5 C the individual must not enter the church and should return home.
- o Ensure that entrance restriction Notice Signs Are Posted or otherwise situated in visible positions at each entrance to the church before every Mass and that the cautions on the signs are pointed out to people entering.
- o Designated Usher must see to it that physical distancing is maintained and that all attending properly wear masks.
- o Review the floor and seat markings to see that they are all in good repair and order.
- o Review the crying room to ensure that it is ready for occupancy. Limit occupancy to families so that the two metre (six foot) social distancing is maintained.

Showing People to Their Seats

- o Families residing the same household and individuals should be seated in pews so that there is two metres (six feet) of space between then and next person/family seated.
- o Try to seat families in one area with plenty of space for them.
- o Remember to skip uneven rows to ensure the two metres (six feet) distance is met.

Collection

- o Collection will proceed in the usual fashion.

Communion

- o Prior to the distribution of Holy Communion, the Priest should advise people of the correct procedures employed for distributing and receiving same.
- o Ushers must keep people distanced two metres (six feet) distance from each other and regulate the pace of the Communion procession. Each usher should remain two metres (six feet) distance away from persons they are directing. People should be directed by row and, when returning, the people must return to the row they departed.
- o Where required, and with sensitivity to those who did not understand the procedures provided, ushers should discretely instruct communicants that it is mandatory for them to wear their masks on until after they receive the Host, and

partake of the Host in an area marked and at least two metres (six feet) away from the person distributing Holy Communion, and that they should remove their mask at this point only to consume the Host and then replace their mask before returning to their pew.

Exiting

- o People may exit with admonition of not getting too close to one another.

Sick Parishioners

- o If an usher notices that someone is demonstrating visible signs of COVID 19 including, but not limited to cough, dizziness, fatigue, shortness of breath, aching muscles, confusion – that person and any related parishioner should be asked to leave and seek medical treatment in a tactful way. The usher should not attempt to lift or help the parishioner in any way. If the parishioner is too sick to move, the paramedics should be called at 911.

Traffic Flow

- o Entrance and exit doors must be strictly used. Must see that people entering are not mixed with people leaving and that each group use doorways designated for entering and exiting. In smaller churches, Ushers must coordinate traffic flow to maintain order. Some role of traffic cop might be instituted to have people come in and out so as not to collide or violate the two-metres (six-feet) distance space rule.
 - Ushers must review the floor and seat markings to see that they are all in good repair and order.
 - Ushers must review the children's cry room area to see if it is closed or open, and if open, that is marked out.

II - SUMMARY SHEET: CHURCH SPACING AND CLEANING

Janitorial and Cleaning Staff (“Staff”)

- o Staff must see to it that all measuring aids to assist people with physical distancing are in place and in good order.
- o Care and attention must be paid to ensuring that all floor and seat affixed tape are in good condition.
- o Wastebaskets should be placed in the church for used tissues, masks and gloves and emptied after every Mass.
- o Washrooms should be cleaned regularly. Care should be taken to make sure the instructions for safe and reliable hand washing techniques remain posted in a visible position.
- o Hand sanitizer dispensers should be placed in proximity to all exits, all washrooms and in the sanctuary.
- o Interior direction signs should be placed in obvious locations for the washroom, etc.
- o Fonts should be emptied.
- o Reconciliation Rooms should be cleaned regularly.
- o On regular basis, or where it is warranted, a disinfecting cloth should be run over fronts and side parts of pews where people’s hands come in touch with them.
- o Church halls should be cleaned in the same manner as the church proper. Chairs should be laid out at two metres (six feet) distance intervals.
- o Sound systems in halls should be checked to ensure that church services can be broadcast within them.

III - SUMMARY SHEET: MASS AMENDMENTS

- o Pre-Mass prayers may continue as long as appropriate spacing is used.
- o Children's liturgy may recommence. Signage will be posted notifying parishioners at all entry points. Parents must be in control of their children at all times; a child cannot be permitted to wander.
- o All persons in the sanctuary will be masked and maintain a two metres (six feet) distance apart.
- o There are no further restrictions on number of lectors.
- o Collection may be taken up again. Ushers should wear masks.
- o Speaking or singing at Mass is respectively restricted to the Priest, Deacon, Lector, cantor or choir who observe physical distancing of three metres (ten-feet).
- o Deacons must be two metres (six feet) from the priest at all times and when not speaking, must wear masks.
- o The priest should remind the assembly of the procedure for Holy Communion prior to the distribution of same.
- o The priest (and deacon) and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion must wash their hands before and after distributing Communion.
- o Eucharistic ministers of Holy Communion are given a ciborium by the priest and return it to the priest after Communion. The priest alone transfers the remaining Eucharist to the tabernacle and places the remaining vessels on the table beside the altar.
- o The priest and ministers of Holy Communion and the communicant shall all wear masks for distributing and receiving Holy Communion.
- o Holy Communion must be released carefully and reverently into the hands of the recipient so that there is no contact between the minister and the communicant.
- o Holy Communion is to be received at a point at least two metres (six feet) from the point of distribution. Only then should the communicant remove his or her mask to receive the Host. The places for such actions should be marked on the floor.
- o Following the Prayer after Communion, the priest presents the pyxes to the ministers to the sick and homebound.
- o The priest (or lector) makes announcements after the Prayer after Communion.
- o Before dismissal, the priest should remind the assembly about leaving the church at the direction of the ushers while observing appropriate distancing.

APPENDIX D: RE-OPENING OFFICES POST-COVID-19 CLOSURES

Sample from Archdiocese of Toronto that can be adapted by a Diocese

Planning Checklist - Phase 2 - Parish Offices

For All Employees

- Stay home if you are feeling unwell, complete the self-assessment on the Ontario COVID-19 website at <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment/> - you will be told what to do next based on the self-assessment results - you can also call Telehealth (1-866-797-0000), your local Public Health unit, or your family doctor.
- Report any COVID-19 diagnosis to HR within 24 hours of receipt at hr@archtoronto.org.
- Review the remote working guidelines document.
- Exercise safety when travelling to and from work and follow recommended guidelines if using public transit, if applicable.
- Use hand sanitizer when entering the office.
- Wear masks for any interaction with any person within a 2 metres (6 feet) distance and ask them to do the same.
- Use a cleaning wipe on your phone, keyboard and mouse daily.
- Wash your hands frequently and practice good hand hygiene throughout the day.
- After a prolonged period of isolation there will be a natural inclination to socialize and catch up with colleagues in person – avoid gathering in groups and remember to always maintain a physical distance of two metres (six feet).
- When scheduling meetings only schedule face-to-face meetings if absolutely necessary. Again, masks should be worn.
- Familiarize yourself with the provided health resources and ask for additional support from your Pastor or HR if needed. If you need some form of accommodation put your request in writing (via email) and be specific about what arrangement you would like and what steps you have taken to mitigate your situation – in cases of accommodation due to school closures parents should work together to develop a schedule that shares childcare responsibilities so that both employers (if applicable) are sharing the accommodation.

For Pastors

- Work with your team to develop a rotational schedule that will allow employees to split their time between remote work and on-site office work – three days on-site per week max.
- Office should be open to the public on a limited basis by appointment only – communicate revised office hours to the public – one to two days per week of availability.
- Review the physical layout of your team’s workspaces and determine if any temporary barriers are required - consult with the Chancery Facilities Department as needed – measures such as Plexiglas barriers can be implemented for safety if needed.
- If any employees request accommodation for childcare or eldercare due to the COVID situation/school closures ask them to confirm what steps they have taken to mitigate their situation and review this information with the HR Director along with your thoughts on how the request can be accommodated, needed adjustments or why it cannot be accommodated.
- Once Phase 2 is underway ensure that staff are sent home if they are not feeling well and report any potential COVID situations to Human Resources at hr@archtoronto.org.
- Remind your team to maintain a two metre (six feet) of distance and wear masks when working together in person – speak up if someone is not remembering to maintain a safe distance or not wearing his or her mask.
- Monitor how your staff are doing and be prepared to offer resources and support if they show any signs of being anxious or overwhelmed – contact HR for direction if needed.
- Domestic abuse is a difficult topic. Times of crisis and shelter at home directives can increase incidences of domestic abuse. If you think that your employee is living in a dangerous home situation address this in a compassionate and confidential way – HR can assist you with how to do this appropriately.
- Work with your employees to ensure that at least five days of accrued vacation time is taken by each employee by year end.

APPENDIX E: COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGIES

Sample from Archdiocese of Toronto that can be adapted by a Diocese

Objectives

- Ensure timely and accurate dissemination of information during pandemic period.
- Expectations regarding work flow as it relates to review and approval of communications shared with a variety of audiences.
- Ensure compliance with government and medical officer directives in moving forward with our own re-opening plans.

Sample Signage

Sample A - General Notice to Parishioners to be posted outside the Church in a visible location and on the parish website.

ATTENTION PARISHIONERS

- Every reasonable precaution has been and will continue to be taken by the diocese to protect the health and safety of those attending this church. There can be no guarantees of complete protection from infection; there will always be risks of contracting viral infection in large gatherings of people.
- During the Coronavirus pandemic, we ask that prior to entering this church, you and your family ensure that your temperature is less than 37.5 degrees Celsius.
- Entrance is not permitted to those who are suffering from: cough, sputum production, shortness of breath, undue fatigue, loss of appetite, muscle aching, runny nose, chills involving shakes or loss of sense or taste or smell.
- If you have travelled outside Canada within the past 14 days, please do not enter the church until any medically directed self-isolation has been completed.
- It is mandatory for you to wear a mask upon entry into the church.
- Please use hand the hand sanitizer at the entrance before entering the church.

Sample B - Notice regarding Physical Distancing to be posted in the church.

PHYSICAL DISTANCING

At all times please maintain a distance of two metres (six feet) increments between you/your family and other individuals/families when entering and exiting the church and during the Communion procession. Please wear a mask at all times when in the church and follow directions of the priest on taking Holy Communion.

Seating is permitted only in the places indicated. Please follow the directions of the ushers.

Sample D - Notice regarding shrines and devotional spaces in the church.

When using this [shrine] please do not touch the statue [image] and maintain a two metres (six feet) distance from others who have come to pray here.

Sample E - Notice Regarding Crying Room Closure.

CRYING ROOM CLOSED

Due to the spacing limitations in effect because of the COVID-19 virus, the Crying Room is closed until further notice.

Sample F - Notice Regarding Additional Seating.

ADDITIONAL SEATING

In order to ensure physical distancing, additional seating is available in the parish hall where you can participate in the Mass. Communion will be brought to you there.

We regret this inconvenience but are grateful that you are with us. Please enter the parish hall (provide details).

Sample G - Notice at entrance door.

ENTRANCE

This door is for entrance to the church only. Please be sure to provide a two-metres (six-feet) distance between yourself and others while entering, attending and exiting the church.

Pews are designated for individual seating. However, families may sit together maintaining a two metres (six feet) distance from other parishioners.

Sample H - Notice at exit door.

EXIT

Please use this door for exiting the church and maintain physical distancing. Please avoid those entering the church.

Sample I - Washroom notice to be placed on washroom door.

NOTICE - WASHROOM

Please use the washroom in emergency or urgent situations only.

Only one person (or one family) is permitted in the washroom at any given time.

Be sure to wash your hands with warm soapy water after using the washroom.

If the washroom requires attention, please advise an usher.

Sample J - Office signage.

During the pandemic it is preferable that all communication with the parish priest take place by phone or email. Appointments may be made with the parish secretary.

Anyone displaying signs of illness should not enter the office.

All persons attending at the office shall wear a mask.

Please be on time for appointments and keep meetings brief.

Please use the hand sanitizer provided before entering the office and cooperate with having your temperature taken as required. You may not enter the office if your temperature is 37.5 degrees C.

Be sure to maintain a two metres (six feet) distance as recommended between yourself and other persons.

Parish Office washrooms are for staff use only.

Sample K - Notice posted at Confessional/Reconciliation room.

Reconciliation Room

The wearing of masks is mandatory for use of the Reconciliation Room. Please do not enter the room if you are unwell.

Communication Tools

The following tools (as applicable) may be employed by diocesan offices and parishes for both internal/external communication purposes.

Note: not all tools are currently employed or available in all dioceses

- Internal email distribution network – can be shared with all staff or department heads as appropriate.
- Dedicated emergency extension – employees can be asked to check messages daily/weekly as appropriate.
- Employee website – a password protected employee website – copies of all formal communication sent internally to chancery staff/satellite offices as well as parish communication is archived in this space.
- Employee virtual “town halls” – GoTo Webinar or Zoom technology to hold virtual town hall meetings with the bishop, chancery/satellite office staff.
- Senior Team Updates – GoToMeeting or Zoom technology for regular senior staff meetings/updates. Departments may use the technology for regular team check-ins and other meetings as required.
- On-site signage – communication posted on the entrance to Chancery office and parishes – suggested wording provided by communications office for consistency.
- Public facing website – diocesan sites or special mini-sites/parish websites provide numerous updates/resources – from spiritual resources to volunteer opportunities, links to public health information, e-bulletins, messages from the pastor, etc.
- Media – local bishop or diocesan representatives engaged in media interviews to provide updates, etc. Assistance from diocesan communications office if applicable.
- LiveStream technology – Daily Masses celebrated by local bishop or parishes available online and through various social media channels. Bishop/pastor can also issue special messages as appropriate. Prayer groups, youth ministry meetings, parish council, etc. continue to gather virtually.
- MailChimp – this tool can be used to communicate to registered email addresses/databases relevant communication from a diocesan or parish level.
- Online donation portal – online donation portals – allow individuals the opportunity to continue to give to their local parish or support the annual appeal.

- Council of Priests/College of Consultors – periodic meetings to advise with these groups have taken place using conference calls, GoToMeeting or Zoom technology.
- Social Media – many parishes have social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) and are using these tools to stay connected to parishioners.
- Robocalls – some parishes have utilized this technology to leave pre-recorded messages with parishioners.
- Telephone Ministry – many parishes are calling parishioners directly or using volunteers to call every family registered during this time of pandemic.
- Flocknote – some parishes are using this technology to email or text updates to parishioners.
- Regular Mail – some parishes are sending targeted mailings to parishioners providing updates and to raise awareness re pastoral activity.

Re-opening Strategies

Chancery Office

There are a number of important internal communications steps to consider. It is anticipated that communication tools noted earlier in this document will be utilized. We also recommend utilizing FAQ (frequently asked questions) resources wherever possible covering a variety of topics. A clear workflow should be established to help disseminate effective communication moving forward:

Strategic Planning

Re-opening Task Force > Senior Team > Consultation as appropriate with department heads/staff>Episcopal Board/Council of Priests > Bishop for final review.

Wherever possible, using technology to garner discussion is recommended, ie. GoToMeeting, Zoom, Webinars, etc. as appropriate.

Communication Sign-Off

It is important to establish a clear protocol for sign-off for final communication pieces. For example – recommended final sign off would require: task force lead, senior manager chiefly responsible for each area (ie. human resources, controller, etc.), chancellor/s as appropriate, bishop & communications office where applicable.

On-Site Signage

Identify department/staff responsible for preparing signage onsite to help support/enforce new protocols. Signage may include – posted notices, decals or other physical distancing images/posters, contact for questions/complaints.

The steps noted above would be in place as we move from phase to phase. These phases (depending on size of diocese) would likely include:

- o **Phase 1: Building Closed** – Essential Staff in the building/offices only. Building closed to visitors/clients, access only by security fob/key. Security presence during day, limited daily cleaning/garbage pick-up. (present situation)
- o **Phase 2: Limited operations** – limited staff in the building, possible rotation, no visitors/clients. Virtual meetings only. Restrictions on gatherings in the building – cafeteria, chapel, common areas, etc. Access by fob/key only.
- o **Phase 3: Building Open with restrictions** – switchboard operational, mail room fully functional, may still be staggered/rotational staff – limited client visits/meetings, restrictions on group gatherings in the building, physical distancing in office settings, etc. Visitors can enter the building.
- o **Phase 4: Return to full operations without restrictions.**
 - Key to ensure that department heads are aware of plans and effectively communicating with their teams throughout the process.
 - Recommendation for a webinar/virtual town hall prior to each stage being implemented and/or post introduction to garner feedback on what has worked, improvements, etc.

Departmental Planning

Departments need to recognize the “new reality” as we shift to re-opening mode. It will not be business as usual and we will not just resume normal operations. This needs to be considered in all aspects of planning – from requests to parishes for use of parish halls, feasibility of large-scale events, communication strategies related to planning, etc. Once an initial timeline for re-opening is established, consideration should be given to overall pastoral planning, striking an appropriate balance between what is reasonable and also recognizing there may be a greater demand on ministries from those who return to the church. It may be practical to bring department heads or other key leaders together for pastoral planning sessions or other related visioning opportunities.

Parish Communication Considerations

Wherever possible, adequate lead time should be factored in to ensure that communication to parishes will provide a reasonable amount of time for parishes to implement new norms. The closure period was immediate and many parishes were scrambling – trying to move quickly on a number of issues from an operations and human resources perspective. This made communications challenging. The more lead time, the better for all partners.

Communication tools noted previously will be employed as parishes communicate plans to gradually reopen. We also highly recommend a series of FAQ resources on various topics wherever possible. Specific phases, permissions, etc. will be established by others but it will be necessary to consider the following once a determination has been made on how to move forward with parish re-openings:

- **Communication from the archdiocese (local bishop) to parishes** – similar to what was done when churches were closed, these communication pieces will likely be required at regular intervals to ensure consistency across the archdiocese. It will be likely accompanied by follow up support from the appropriate department (Spiritual Affairs,

Temporal Affairs, Human Resources, etc.) regarding operations, protocols, procedures, etc.

- **Communication from the archdiocese to the general public** – media, faithful, etc. to formally announce updated plans. This will be disseminated through social media, website, media releases, interviews, etc. (note this may be the same communication as a) but should be reviewed as appropriate for sensitivity, nuance, etc. Important to identify key leaders available for media interviews as appropriate.
- **Communication from Parish (Pastor) to Parishioners regarding operations** – using the communication tools noted previously. Providing parishioners with a local perspective – How will this look at my local parish? Mass times, office hours, etc.
- **Communication to Parishioners onsite once operations resume** – helping parishioners adapt to the “new normal” at each phase of “recovery”. How does a parish communicate physical distancing once parishioners arrive? New procedures for communion, collection, changes to worship practices (no handshakes, holy water fonts, etc.), gathering pre/post Mass. While general guidance will be issued by the local bishop, parish committees will be required to help implement the “new normal”. Volunteer/Ministers of Hospitality conducting “head counts” or directing traffic. This will require multiple forms of communication – in person, signage, repetition week to week for a period of time, e-bulletin announcements, regular updates and shifts once a new phase is upon us.

Parishes will likely require some assistance/guidance from the archdiocese – ie. common posters, decals, signage, etc. Will these need to be translated? Graphics only? In addition to communicating change, there will be practical requirements – ie. enough volunteers at every Mass, sourcing supplies (hand sanitizer, masks, etc.). This will require additional guidance/communication from the relevant departments and support staff. Again, lead time is key to ensure parishes are properly prepared.

Conclusion

We are navigating a situation that is unprecedented in its impact of every aspect of church operations and ministry. Effective communication during this transition period will be critical to reassure staff, clergy and the faithful that the church is thoughtfully planning a safe return to ministry and the workplace, adapting our programs and pastoral approach as appropriate.

Utilizing the communication tools, workflow and suggested approach will provide a roadmap for effectively conveying key messages to the diverse arch/diocesan community. We should also be prepared to adapt our approach as circumstances warrant, given that the past number of months have been fluid and our ability to “re-open” relies heavily on government/medical directives. We must also recognize the possibility that we will have to reverse course and again close down operations should a significant “variant” wave(s) occur.