

Guidance Summary
from the Task Force for Re-entering, Re-opening, and Re-imagining for the Diocese
of New Jersey
June 12, 2020

This is how we love one another

This is a summary of key points from the “Report and Recommendations of the Task Force for Re-entering, Re-opening, and Re-imagining for the Diocese of New Jersey.” It is meant to be used as a quick reference. It is not a substitute for reading the whole report. This guide includes references to certain pages in the full report to help you make your congregation’s plan. You are also encouraged to make use of the Appendices in the full report.

Key Principles

- Prevent transmission by disinfecting things people will touch (clean regularly and thoroughly, and limit space use)
- Prevent transmission by limiting the spread of droplets from nose and mouth (wear masks, limit singing).
- Maintain 6 feet of separation between individuals not living in the same house.

Remember: People can be contagious without showing symptoms

Overview

- a) The diocesan plan will unfold over several stages, similar to the stages in the State of New Jersey’s re-opening plan, but they are **not the same** as the State’s stages.
- b) The Bishop will move the Diocese from stage to stage, with additional guidance issued from the Task Force as appropriate, and we will not get ahead of the State’s stages. (p. 4)
- c) Your congregation may not get ahead of the Diocese, but you can choose to move more slowly than the Diocese. (see p. 4)
- d) Until your re-entry plan is approved by the Task Force and Bishop’s office, no persons will be in buildings in the Diocese except for individuals who have critical tasks that must be performed on location. (p. 14)
- e) Before you actually make your plan for in-person worship or meetings, please find out if your congregation is ready for returning with the necessary limits on contact and events. (p. 5 and sample assessment in Appendix B)
- f) Learn to use the resources and information at the State of New Jersey Coronavirus information hub: <https://covid19.nj.gov/index.html> and check regularly for updates (p. 6)

- g) Clear communication to the congregation, neighbors, tenants, and guests is essential at all stages of re-entering our buildings. (p. 7)
- h) Place printed health education materials in areas such as bathrooms and church vestibules. (p. 13)
- i) When civil and Diocesan guidelines conflict, the more restrictive guidelines should be followed. (p. 10)

Maintaining Closed Buildings

- a) Properly maintain “closed” buildings in order to stave off problems from organisms such as Legionella and mold. Give particular attention to the Water System and AC/HVAC system recommendations in the full report. (p. 14)
- b) Spaces that are completely unused for seven days only need routine cleaning, not disinfecting.

Cleaning and disinfecting

- a) Follow CDC recommended cleaning and disinfecting procedures after every use of the building, with special attention to frequently touched surfaces such as door handles and light switches. (See p. 15 and Appendix C of the full report.)
- b) These guidelines DO NOT require congregations to hire professional cleaners. (p. 13)

Employees and Volunteers

- a) Employees and volunteers should work from home whenever possible (p. 7)
- b) Any employee, volunteer, member, or guest who feels sick or has any symptoms of illness should stay at home. (p. 7)

Administrative issues

- a) Record names and contact information of everyone attending any in-person worship or meeting of the church. (p. 10)
- b) Assign one person, with one alternate, responsible for communicating to the congregation and the Diocese about any known cases of COVID-19.
- c) Assign one congregational leader to be the liaison and provide oversight with outside groups (p. 10)
- d) Consult with your insurance provider regarding any exclusions related to communicable diseases. (p. 11)

Masks

- a) Everyone must wear a mask covering their nose and mouth when at a church meeting or worship service. (see p. 7) The mask has to fit close to the face (for example, bandannas and scarves that are loose on the sides or bottom are not good masks).
- b) Post signs to help people understand how and why to wear a mask.

Tenants and Outside groups

- a) All outside groups using the buildings of congregations and ministries in the Diocese of New Jersey must follow distancing, masking, contact tracing, and cleaning requirements set forth in the full report. (p. 9) A short guide for tenants and outside groups is available separately.
- b) Ensure that you have a signed agreement for the use of space, updated with the requirements listed above, for any group using church premises. This is to include updated certificates of insurance with the congregation as a named insured. (pp. 9, 10, 11)
- c) Determine how to ensure cleaning of church spaces after use by outside groups. (p. 10)
- d) Retail, educational, food service or similar ministries of the congregation should follow guidelines from the State of New Jersey and county or municipal authorities applicable to that type of business if it were independent from the church. (p. 10)

People and spacing

- a) The maximum number of people in your building, or at an outside gathering, is either the number who fit with at least 6 feet between individuals (or groups of people who live in the same house), OR the number allowed by the State of New Jersey, whichever is LOWER. (p. 6)
- b) Determine a fair system to limit attendance (p. 6)
- c) Plan in advance for how to respond if too many people arrive. (p. 6)
- d) Train ushers, greeters and church leaders on how to manage procedures for limiting attendance, contact tracing, and other new features of limited worship and meetings. (p. 6)
- e) People must at all times stay 6 feet away from anyone who does not live in the same house they do.. (p. 7)

Worship

- a) People at higher risk are encouraged to remain sheltered at home and attend services remotely (p. 8)
- b) It is strongly recommended that congregations and ministries of this Diocese continue to offer non-physical gatherings and worship aids, like online or telephone services (p. 8)
- c) Make sure access to the worship or sacraments of the church is equally distributed between those able to attend and those who are not. (p. 8)
- d) Eucharistic practices must conform to the rubrics, doctrine, and discipline of the Episcopal Church and the Diocese of New Jersey. (p. 9)
- e) High risk clergy and lay leaders should continue to record or stream worship from home. In-person worship services should not risk the health of congregation or leaders (p. 16)

Preparing for worship

- i. Mark pews to make minimum 6-foot distancing clear. Everyone, including clergy and leaders, must sit/stand at least 6 feet away from any other person who does not live in the same house as they do.
- ii. Remove all books from pews. Handouts should be printed and left in the church 3 days before the service.
- iii. Anyone preparing the altar or church for worship should wear masks and gloves. (pp. 19, 20)
- iv. Make a plan for people entering and exiting the church to keep 6-foot distancing at all times. Include plans to avoid before and after service gatherings on the grounds or in parking lots. (p. 21)
- v. Make a plan for what happens if more people show up than are allowed. Remember that clergy, leaders, ushers, etc. all count toward the maximum number of people.
- vi. Train ushers, greeters, or other leaders to help everyone present follow the guidelines for entry and exit, seating, communion, masks, etc. Ushers should not be “high risk” individuals. (p. 21)
- vii. Allow at least one hour between worship services.
- viii. No other activities should be scheduled in church buildings or grounds during worship services.

During Worship

- i. Keep a complete record of names and contact information for everyone at the service, without sharing pen/paper etc. (p. 21)
- ii. Everyone in the church must wear masks. The congregation should have masks available for those who cannot bring their own.
- iii. Masks may be removed for preaching, reading scripture, or leading prayers as long as the person speaking is at least 20 feet away from any other person. (p. 17)
- iv. Only one person may sing during the service, and only if they are 30 feet from anyone else while singing. (p. 17)
- v. No physical contact between any people who do not live in the same house. Exchange the Peace with a wave, bow, or other greeting without leaving your place. (p. 17)
- vi. Collect the offering at one place without physical contact or “passing the plate.” Online giving or mailing checks is even safer and should be encouraged. (p. 17)
- vii. Vestments should not be shared from one service to the next, and only the person wearing the vestments should touch them. Vestments can be used by someone else if they have been untouched for a week. (p. 17)

Communion

- i. If Holy Eucharist is celebrated, only the Celebrant may receive the wine. Everyone else will receive bread only. (p. 19)
- ii. If the Celebrant does not wear a mask for the prayer of consecration, the bread should be covered to prevent droplet contact. (p. 19)

- iii. The celebrant should wear a mask to distribute communion. If the celebrant touches another person's hand while distributing bread, they should immediately disinfect their hands (with hand sanitizer or soap and water) before giving communion to the next person. (p. 19)
- iv. Make sure that people receiving communion can stay 6 feet apart from each other. Kneeling at the altar rail is not recommended. (pp. 19, 20)
- v. Set up a hand sanitizer station so that everyone will use sanitizer right before receiving communion. (p. 20)
- vi. People may take off their masks to consume the bread, then should immediately put their mask back on. (p. 19)
- vii. No one is required to receive communion. The Prayer for Spiritual Communion should be printed in the program for anyone who does not come forward. If someone wants a blessing instead of bread, the priest should offer the usual blessing without touching the person. (p. 20)

Outdoor worship

- i. Outdoor worship follows the same guidelines as indoor worship, except that the attendance limits from the State may be different.
NB: A closed tent is indoors (and must follow indoor fire regulations as well as indoor COVID precautions), a canopy with no sides is an outdoor space.

Other ministries of the congregation

- a) No food may be eaten at gatherings on church property. Any food offered must be pre-packaged and "to go". (p. 22)
- b) No in-person Sunday School or VBS for Summer 2020. (p. 22)
- c) No childcare during worship. If a family needs to use nursery facilities for any reason, the space must be cleaned and disinfected immediately after. (p. 22)
- d) Feeding programs should be take-out/pickup only.
- e) Anyone involved in food preparation must follow CDC guidance and wear masks, gloves, and maintain 6-foot distancing at all times.
- f) Home visiting can be done on a case-by-case basis. Everyone involved in the visit must agree ahead of time on protocols including distancing, masks, etc. Physical touch during visits is strongly discouraged. If touch must happen, use hand sanitizer or wash hands before and after. (p. 22)