



The Episcopal Diocese of Olympia

The Episcopal Church in Western Washington

www.ecww.org

A Guide to Gathering in Person

THE DIOCESE OF OLYMPIA'S PHASED-IN PLAN FOR RESUMING IN-PERSON WORSHIP AND ACTIVITIES

05/07/20
VERSION 1

From the Office of the Bishop

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Introduction

To the Good People of God in the Diocese of Olympia,

We live in interesting times. That might be one of the greatest understatements I have heard lately, but no doubt it is true. These have been especially interesting days for the church. We have learned a lot. We still have lots to learn. We have gained perspective on things we often took for granted, and we have learned of things that are not that important after all. In the face of all of this, we still have each other, and most importantly, an amazing God who loves us all and wishes only the best for us. I put my hope in those two things right now - each of you and our God.

This document has been worked on by our diocesan staff, with review by others in the diocese with expertise in these areas. It is loosely but carefully mirrored off of the four-phase plan offered by our governor this past week. It is offered to all of you as a roadmap to what our future might look like in the days ahead as we phase-in our return to face-to-face encounters. I think it is very safe to say, this will not be fast. As our governor has said so well, this will not be like turning on a light switch, but more like slowly turning the dial - and the turning will be going on for a while. It also might be two turns forward and then one back. This is new for all of us. I am blessed to be walking through it with all of you.

This will probably be stated several times in this document, but to assure you - we are trying carefully to use words in it that help you determine if these are mandates, suggestions, encouragements, or requirements. We all hope to be conscious of the importance of those words, but if, in the course of reading you find anything that does not seem clear, please do not hesitate to ask.

This document has four main sections:

1. Who and What Will Be Deciding Factors in Our Decisions in the Diocese of Olympia Regarding Reopening Our Churches? Use this section to inform yourself and others as to **how our decisions are being made** and **why they are being made**.
2. Questions and Actions You and Your Congregation Should Be Addressing in Preparation for Reopening. Use this section to **prepare your congregation to move into future phases** and **prepare for the possibility that we may move in either direction** depending on the circumstances.
3. The Four Phases. Use this section to **understand and plan how to change the gathering and distancing behaviors of your congregation** based upon the current phase.

4. Bibliography, Resources, and Additional Reading. Use this section to **understand the methodology** behind this plan, **find resources for your congregation**, and **read more from experts and researchers** who have analyzed the current situations.

I have every belief that this document will evolve. In other words, what we see in it today, may or may not be what we are following tomorrow. There may be adjustments, and we will attempt to communicate that to you in every way we can along the way.

Until then, stay together in Spirit. Know that we are united in Christ, even when apart.

Bless you all,

The Rt. Rev. Gregory Rickel
VIII Bishop of Olympia and Chief Steward
May 7, 2020

WASHINGTON'S PHASED APPROACH

Reopening Business and Modifying Physical Distancing Measures

	 Phase 1	 Phase 2	 Phase 3	 Phase 4
High-Risk Populations*	Continue to Stay Home, Stay Healthy	Continue to Stay Home, Stay Healthy	Continue to Stay Home, Stay Healthy	Resume public interactions, with physical distancing
Recreation	Some outdoor recreation (hunting, fishing, golf, boating, hiking)	All outdoor recreation involving fewer than 5 people outside your household (camping, beaches, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Outdoor group rec. sports activities (5-50 people) - Recreational facilities at <50% capacity (public pools, etc.) 	Resume all recreational activity
Gatherings (social, spiritual)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - None - Drive in spiritual service with one household per vehicle 	Gather with no more than 5 people outside your household per week	Allow gatherings with no more than 50 people	Allow gatherings with >50 people
Travel	Only essential travel	Limited non-essential travel within proximity of your home	Resume non-essential travel	Continue non-essential travel
Business/Employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Essential businesses open - Existing construction that meet agreed upon criteria - Landscaping - Automobile sales - Retail (curb-side pick-up orders only) - Car washes - Pet walkers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Remaining manufacturing - New construction - In-home/domestic services (nannies, housecleaning, etc.) - Retail (in-store purchases allowed with restrictions) - Real estate - Professional services/office-based businesses (telework remains strongly encouraged) - Hair and nail salons/Barbers - Housecleaning - Restaurants <50% capacity table size no larger than 5 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Restaurants <75% capacity/ table size no larger than 10 - Bars at <25% capacity - Indoor gyms at <50% capacity - Movie theaters at <50% capacity - Government (telework remains strongly encouraged) - Libraries - Museums - All other business activities not yet listed except for nightclubs and events with greater than 50 people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nightclubs - Concert venues - Large sporting events - Resume unrestricted staffing of worksites, but continue to practice physical distancing and good hygiene

* High-risk populations are currently defined by CDC as: persons 65 years of age and older; people of all ages with underlying medical conditions (particularly not well controlled) including people with chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma, people who have serious heart conditions, people who are immunocompromised, people with severe obesity, people with diabetes, people with chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis, and people with liver disease; people who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility.

 THE DIOCESE OF OLYMPIA PHASED APPROACH Reopening Church and Modifying Physical Distancing and Sacraments				
	 Phase 1	 Phase 2	 Phase 3	 Phase 4
Eucharist	NO	NO	YES, NO Common Cup	YES, with Common Cup
Virtual Services	YES, 10 or Less People	YES, 10 or Less People	Continue for Those That Cannot Physically Attend	Consider Continuing
Funerals/ Weddings	NO	YES, 10 or Less People, Follow Specific Guidelines	YES, No More Than 50 People	Unrestricted
Meetings	ONLINE	5 People or Less or ONLINE	50 People or Less	Unrestricted
Diocesan and Group Events	ONLY ONLINE	ONLY ONLINE	50 People or Less	Unrestricted
Church Buildings	CLOSED	CLOSED	OPEN for 50 or Less and Under Guidelines	Unrestricted
Childcare, Sunday School, Youth Activities	NONE	NONE	50 People or Less	Unrestricted

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Section 1: Who and What Will Be Deciding Factors in Our Decisions in the Diocese of Olympia Regarding Reopening Our Churches?

Throughout this crisis, the Office of the Bishop has been monitoring information coming from the King County Health Department, the Washington State Health Department, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the White House, and our governor. We have great confidence in our governor and his decisions around this pandemic.

In a sense, the whole nation, and many of the resources mentioned above, have been informed heavily by our University of Washington modeling at the Institute for Health Metrics (IHME). IHME is an independent population health research center at UW Medicine, part of the University of Washington, that has developed projections based on demand for hospital services, including the availability of ventilators, general hospital beds, and ICU beds, as well as daily and cumulative deaths due to COVID-19. In particular, IHME's periodically updated analysis of when states can safely consider easing current social distancing policies while shifting to robust containment strategies (widely available testing, contact tracing and case-based isolation, restrictions on mass gatherings), provides a unique insight into public health capacity and containment efforts in different states. You can keep up in real time with these updates by going to <http://www.healthdata.org/COVID/updates>.

The White House is using this possibly more than any other model, and much of our country is as well. We will continue to monitor these, and other sources, as we make our decisions going forward.

According to the CDC, the American Enterprise Institute, the John Hopkins Center for Health Security, and the White House, a state can begin a phased approach to reopening when:

- There has been a sustained reduction in COVID-19 cases for at least 14 days;
- Hospitals in the state are safely able to treat all patients requiring hospitalization without resorting to crisis standards of care;
- The state is able to test all people with COVID-19 symptoms; and
- The state is able to conduct active monitoring of confirmed cases and their contacts.

You will note that this is a steep bar to reach and our state is not yet there by these standards. However, we do seem to be making progress toward them.

The John Hopkins Center for Health Security also advises that we “*recognize that the desire to get back to normal as quickly as possible is a common reaction in the catastrophic context, and it is an impulse worth restraining.*” You should note that this quote sums up our office’s usual approach to this, which is a far more conservative one. We want our churches to reopen as soon as possible, but more than that, as soon as safely possible. Whatever plan we implement must be one that considers ALL those we walk this path with.

This is especially important for us in the Diocese of Olympia, as many new infections and super-spreading events have been linked directly to religious services and choir practices. It is important that we continue to pay special attention to any and all ways we gather.

Washington State has announced a four-phase plan toward a safe reopening, which we will mirror here in the diocese. The state will stay in every phase for a minimum of three weeks. No phase will last less than three weeks before moving to the next phase, in order to allow one complete disease incubation period plus an additional week to compile complete data and confirm trends. Please only take this as a guide, as the timing will change from phase to phase. **The Office of the Bishop will be making all decisions about when we move from one phase to the next within the diocese, based on the above guidance.** No local congregation shall make this decision on their own.

We hope this explains our frequent analysis of the situation and the resources we look to as we move forward.

Section 2: Questions and Actions You and Your Congregation Should Be Addressing in Preparation for Reopening

These proposed phases will require much planning on your part. Here are just some of the preparations and questions you may want to look at and think through now.

Note: Throughout this section, we will be referring to individuals in high-risk populations or with preexisting conditions. High-risk populations are currently defined by CDC as: persons 65 years of age and older; people of all ages with underlying medical conditions (particularly not well controlled), including people with chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma, people who have serious heart conditions, people who are immunocompromised, people with severe obesity, people with diabetes, people with chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis, and people with liver disease; people who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility.

Preparing Your Church

- Deep clean your entire church including pews, bathrooms, doorknobs, light switches, stair railings, microphones, and all heavily, often-touched surfaces.
- Consider removing all non-essential items, including Books of Common Prayer and Hymnals, from rooms so that there are fewer surfaces to touch.
- Post signs about non-contact greetings and refraining from shaking hands or hugging.
- Communicate with your congregation about the preparations that you have done for their arrival and that, if they are sick, they should stay home and join online instead.
- Begin to think through how to conduct both passive (temperatures taken at home) and active (temperatures taken at the door) screening? Can ushers take temperatures with touchless thermometers? Will you require people to record and report their temperatures taken at home? The Office of the Bishop will send out more direct guidance when and if screenings are required.

Physical Distancing

- Keep an online worship option for those who are vulnerable or afraid to come in-person. If you do not already have an online option, begin thinking how you will create one or utilize others that are available around the diocese. This is a huge consideration. If you cannot

provide your own online service through some platform, you will even more carefully need to discern how you stay connected with those who cannot physically attend.

- Plan seating so that people sit six or more feet apart. People who live together can sit together.
- Plan for dismissing congregants in an orderly way that ensures social distancing.
- More considerations:
 - Consider holding multiple services with a few attendees. Some are considering a lottery system or reservation system accomplished before the service.
 - Worship spaces will need to be cleaned and sanitized between each service.
 - Consider having people sign up for services in advance while allowing for a few new people to drop in.
 - Create or continue holding online and/or virtual services dedicated to those who are more vulnerable.
 - Create and assign fixed seating to maintain safe distances. Families from one household can sit together.
 - Consider holding services outside, continuing all social distancing, screening, and size limits for the current phase.
 - If you choose to offer music, consider alternatives that do not include groups of people singing, such as soloists, instrumental music (not including wind instruments), and recorded music (complying with all streaming copyright restrictions). <https://ecww.org/live-streaming-resources-for-churches/>

Prevent Touching Other People

- No handshakes or hugs.
- Create new ways for your community to do non-contact greetings. Bowing is a great alternative.

Prevent Touching Objects That the Community Is Accustomed to Handling Communally

- Consider suspending Eucharist until physical distancing restrictions are significantly modified.
- Avoid passing a collection plate, but instead have stations in the church where people can drop offerings and continue and encourage online giving.
- Do not hand out bulletins and do remove Bibles, hymnals, pens, information card, etc. from pews.
- Project all announcements and hymns on screen instead of using handouts.

Encourage Healthy Hygiene Among Participants

- Provide anti-bacterial dispensers with sanitizing solution at the entrance and in the worship space.
- Require people to wear non-surgical face coverings and supply ones to those who arrive without them.
- Place disposable face tissues within easy reach and closed bins for used tissues.
- Provide visual displays of advice on physical distancing, hand hygiene, and respiratory etiquette.
- Empower ushers to enforce the guidelines set out by congregational/diocesan leadership.

Staff and Volunteers

- NO staff or volunteer should be required to be face-to-face, especially if they are in a high-risk group.
- Consider a temperature check on all staff and volunteers, knowing that normal temperatures do not ensure that a person is virus-free.
- Limit volunteers to those without pre-existing conditions and those who are under 65 years of age.
- Instruct greeters on how to greet post-quarantine - no handshakes or hugs.
- Have greeters hold doors.
- Consider delaying the reopening of childcare services.
- When you do decide to reopen childcare services:
 - Preregister children to limit how many are in any room at a time.
 - Limit leaders in children's areas to those with no preexisting conditions and those under 65 years of age.
 - Have a list of what has been cleaned and when in each room.
 - Note that the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children two years of age and under DO NOT wear face masks or face coverings.

Amenities

- Decide whether to keep restrooms open based on current guidelines.
- Do not provide coffee stations or meals until current guidelines advise that it is appropriate.

Frequently Clean Worship Spaces and Buildings

- Clean immediately before and after all gatherings.
- Frequently clean often-touched objects such as doorknobs, light switches, and stair railings with disinfectant.

- Cleaning and sanitization resources:
 - The CDC page on how to disinfect: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html>
 - EPA approved disinfectants for COVID-19: <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>
 - King County Health Department resources, including posters: <https://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/health/child-teen-health/child-care-health/bleach.aspx>

Other Things to Consider as We Move Through the Phases

- High-risk individuals - whether staff, volunteers, parishioners, or program participants - should continue to stay home.
- Churches with the resources to do so should continue using technology for online worship and meetings.
- It is appropriate to record worship from inside your church while maintaining appropriate physical distancing (six feet apart, and more than six feet for people who are singing), and for all people to wear masks.
- Governance and program committees of fewer than 10 people should seriously consider continuing to meet online, but groups this size can consider meeting in person while wearing masks and maintaining physical distancing and following all other health directives.
- Consider continuing to gather online for Bible studies and small groups; any in-person groups should be limited to 10 or fewer people and all people will wear masks.
- All levels of church leadership need to lead with knowledge and information to help our people cope with the changing nature of the phased community approach our health leaders will be taking.
- The CDC recommends wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain (e.g., grocery stores and pharmacies) especially in areas of significant community-based transmission.
- Now is a time to renew relationships through small groups, including through continued use of Zoom and other online platforms. Leverage the work you have done in the past two months for mission in the community.
- In-person Vacation Bible School is not a good idea this year and mission trips are inadvisable.
- Food preparation can continue inside church kitchens, but only with staff and volunteers that are outside the risk group and who have taken and followed all requirements and guidelines. Food distribution inside the building is not allowed until further notice.
- Churches with homeless shelters can continue to operate, following all social distancing and other guidelines.

- Blood drives are encouraged, and we urge you to allow these services to use your facility when needed.
- Drive-in blessings are possible in Phase I as described in that phase description below.

Questions to Ask as You Prepare

- With those in high-risk categories likely continuing to stay at home, how will you reach and serve them during this time?
- Will you maintain an online streaming option once you are back together worshipping in your physical space? How will that need to adjust when there is also in-person worship happening?
- Are your clergy comfortable returning to in-person worship? If not, what is the plan?
- How many people can your worship space hold if you are worshipping in family groups sitting six feet apart?
- Is there value in postponing Holy Communion? Consider Morning Prayer for the months of May and June especially if the safety measures required for celebrating the Holy Eucharist will be too much for your congregation to manage right now.
- How will you cap attendance at events so there is room for members of the community to join you and so you don't go over guidelines?
- Will services need a reservation list and more logistical coordination? Who does that?
- Can you continue small group gatherings online?
- Can you update your building use agreements to reflect the new realities of COVID-19?
- How will you ensure sanitation and disinfection of your physical plant? To include, but not limited to:
 - Worship bulletin disposal, prayer books, etc.;
 - Areas where small groups gather during the week;
 - Nurseries and/or playgrounds;
 - Pews or chairs following worship; and
 - Doorknobs, bathrooms, other areas that people touch when in your building.
- If someone contracts COVID-19, how will you communicate with your congregation and members who may have come into contact with that individual while still maintaining privacy and pastoral care?
- If someone who has been in your building contracts COVID-19, how will you do a more intensive cleaning prior to its next use?
- How will you communicate your safety plan and best practices to the congregation?
- How will you pastorally deal with people acting out or ignoring protocol?
- How will you prepare your congregation in the event we experience a second wave and need to temporarily return to more assertive forms of distancing?

Section 3: The Four Phases

Before we lay out the various phases as we see them, a few reminders. First, there is no set date on any of these phases. You, the local congregation, are not to make your own plans outside the phase the Office of Bishop has declared we are currently in. For the sake of this discussion no change from what is in place now should take place until at least May 17, 2020. And most of our current restrictions will remain in place through May 31.

In all of these please also note that this office, and the bishop in particular, are not requiring any congregation to go into the phases when they are allowed by the Office of the Bishop. In other words, when we finally declare that this office is opening up to Phase I, if, in your local context, you decide not to move into that phase at this time, you may wait. Please do not feel compelled to move ahead. Also, if members of your staff or congregation are concerned about moving into the phase, even though the rest of your congregation plans to move ahead, please do all in your power to make them comfortable with that decision, accepted and honored for it, and made as much a part of the community through other means as are practically possible.

Phase I

In the Washington State Phased Approach Plan

(<https://coronavirus.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2020-05/PhasedReopeningChart.pdf>), Phase I is essentially where we have been and are now, with a few minor changes. Phase II will begin when all of the White House criteria are met. In brief, look for two weeks of declining case counts, widespread availability of testing, contact tracing, and no PPE shortages. You can read more about this in Section One above.

The stay-at-home orders in Washington State, other than the several recreational changes the governor has made, are all still in effect, and will be until May 31. Our diocesan closures will mirror this response. It is our belief that we are currently in Phase I.

One specific point made for Phase I in the Washington State Phase plan is “Drive-in spiritual service with one household per vehicle.” This is one restriction we plan to lift on May 17. May 17 will be the first Sunday you can offer a “Drive-in spiritual service” of some kind if you so choose.

If you choose to do this, we are requiring the following restrictions:

- As the plan suggests only one family per vehicle.
- People greeting the cars and those in the cars must wear masks.
- Windows should remain shut if possible, and when opened at least six feet of distance should be kept between presider and congregants.

- There will be no singing at these events.
- Eucharist, in any form, is not allowed.
- No laying on of hands, or physical touch is allowed
- You may not distribute flyers, bulletins, crosses, or any material objects.
- People should not be allowed to exit their cars.

You can review the basic guidance on spiritual drive-in services from the governor's office here: <https://ecww.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Spiritual-Drive-in-Services-Guidance-Memo.pdf>

There are currently no other changes to our diocesan guidelines and restrictions. As we move through Phase I you should continue the following:

- Churches should continue holding online worship services only.
- You can continue recording virtual worship in the sanctuary, with 10 people or less, while maintaining at least six feet of space between people (greater distance between those who are singing) and by following any health restrictions or guidelines in place, such as taking temperatures before volunteers and/or staff arrive and when they arrive as well as filling out the health questionnaire.
- Bible studies and small groups continue to meet online.
- Keep office functions as limited as possible to ensure essential operations. Those in the office should be wearing masks; if you have more than one person in the office, make sure that surfaces, including the phone, are regularly sanitized. If at all possible, continue to let people work from home.
- Church councils and leadership teams of less than 10 should continue meeting online.
- High risk individuals, whether staff or volunteers, should continue to shelter in place and should not be part of any of the in-person activities above.
- High-risk individuals are currently defined by CDC as: persons 65 years of age and older; people of all ages with underlying medical conditions (particularly not well controlled), including people with chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma, people who have serious heart conditions, people who are immunocompromised, people with severe obesity, people with diabetes, people with chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis, and people with liver disease; people who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility.

Phase II

Phase II will begin when all of the White House criteria are met. In brief, look for two weeks of declining case counts, widespread availability of testing, contact tracing, and no PPE shortages. You can read more about this in Section One above. When the Office of the Bishop has announced that the diocese has moved into Phase II, we will follow these guidelines:

- Consider allowing building users/renters back in (music lessons, etc.) if they are able to observe gathering limits and distancing protocols, and you are able to accommodate the cleaning needs.
- In Phase II, the only real change we will make is that we are going to allow weddings and funerals, but these should be kept to less than 10 in attendance. If you need to help set a limit, consider using immediate family. We advise only publicizing the date and location to those who are on the approved list to prevent hurt feelings or awkward situations. See the “Guide for Funerals” for additional resources. During this phase you could also keep up the basic practice so far of simply postponing any kind of memorial until we move into a later phase.

Phase III

In Phase III of the governor’s plan, non-essential travel can resume, and gatherings can increase from a low of five to up to 50. This will allow some of our churches to consider meeting in-person again. In Phase III of the diocesan plan, we will follow these guidelines:

- Worship, face-to-face, may begin depending on size:
 - Churches over 50 average Sunday attendance (ASA): We recommend that you continue holding online worship, recording from home or the church with participation from small groups of people. If you choose to have multiple services, have a plan for managing the number of people per service. Have a plan to clean surfaces between services. Consider exploring what small group worship could look like as an alternative.
 - Smaller churches (under 50 ASA) might consider holding in person worship but make sure your space is large enough to allow for social distancing. Have a contingency plan for overflows beyond the approved number of people.

General recommendations for worship:

- Whichever alternative you choose, we recommend continuing to share worship online as there will be many who are at high risk and cannot join you or may not feel safe to return even if precautions are in place.
- Wear cloth, non-surgical, face masks while at church, as is recommended in public spaces.
- Offering Communion/Eucharist safely will continue to be a challenge, as touching a face mask (to remove or shift it) contaminates it. Proximity to the communicant is a risk to the communion ministers and those receiving. You are still not allowed to share the common cup at Eucharist. You may share the bread, with only one person distributing, doing everything in their power not to make physical contact with the recipient. If contact is made, stop, and immediately sanitize before continuing offering communion. Make sure an abundance of sanitizer is available and is used by every person coming for communion.

Give serious consideration to options that reduce contact. This may mean you need to further postpone offering Communion.

- Singing is among the riskier behaviors when it comes to spreading droplets/aerosols which can carry the virus a significant distance and remain suspended in the air. A cloth mask is unlikely to be enough to protect you or your neighbor. We recommend against singing during this phase, in the church when the congregation is gathered.
- Use no-touch alternatives for passing the peace, collecting offering, and liturgical resources. Consider removing prayer books and Bibles if you will have multiple services. Use bulletins (do not reuse) or screens as alternatives.
- Distancing: Have people spread out in sanctuary space with one family unit per pew or at least six feet apart in all directions; keep empty pews between families. Explore meeting in a fellowship hall or outdoors if your space is small.
- We recommend against offering a fellowship/coffee hour. Continue encouraging people to leave the building rather than mingling.
- Weddings, funerals, and confirmations could take place in a more traditional way, with careful attention to guest lists so as to keep under the 50-person limit and physical distancing plans.
- Small Groups and Faith Formation:
 - Offer opportunities for Bible studies and small groups to meet in person or online. We recommend maintaining some online options for people who do not feel comfortable.
 - Don't yet have small groups? This is an opportunity to renew relationships and perhaps start some small groups within your congregation. As conditions shift, these small groups can provide spiritual and emotional support to one another and offer a setting for mission. If they are less than 50, they may meet in person.
 - We recommend against offering Vacation Bible School in person. While the risk to children is somewhat lower, there is an ongoing risk of them carrying the virus back home and sharing it with other family members. Whether or not they are symptomatic, someone who is infected can spread the virus. Consider whether you might offer an online or no-touch drop-off activity.
 - Similarly, we anticipate mission trips to be unwise until at least Phase IV. This is an ideal time for mission in the local area. Are there food pantries or other community services in need of volunteers? Practice the art of mission in place. Keep your groups small so as not to overwhelm the ministries you serve. You are there to assist, not to occupy or divert their resources.
- Church Business
 - Regular office functions could resume more or less safely while maintaining social distancing and wearing masks. Continue to attend to cleaning and sanitizing the office. Pay particular attention to high-touch surfaces and cleaning hands after dealing with the offering.

- Church councils and leadership teams of less than 50 might consider meeting in person while wearing masks and maintaining social distancing or continue meeting online.
- Smaller churches (under 50 members) could consider holding in-person meetings if official business is required.
- Allow building users/renters to resume operations, with a plan to address cleaning needs and agreement to observe gathering and distancing protocols.
- General Building
 - Post signs indicating symptoms and urging people to stay home/seek medical attention if they have symptoms.
 - Maintain a good stock of tissue, soap, hand sanitizer, and disposable paper towels for drying hands.
 - Clean the building regularly and between user groups, paying extra attention to high-touch surfaces.
 - If you become aware of someone in the church or a building user infected with COVID-19, put your communication plan into action, and cooperate fully with contact tracers.
- High risk individuals - whether staff, volunteers, or program participants - should continue to shelter-in-place.
- High-risk populations are currently defined by CDC as: persons 65 years of age and older; people of all ages with underlying medical conditions (particularly not well controlled), including people with chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma, people who have serious heart conditions, people who are immunocompromised, people with severe obesity, people with diabetes, people with chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis, and people with liver disease; people who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility.

Phase IV

In the Washington Plan the shift from Phase III to Phase IV is based on a re-evaluation of the situation using the original criteria. You might expect several more weeks of improving conditions to pass before this shift.

It is possible that conditions will not improve, but infections will increase again. In that case, physical distancing recommendations would need to be tightened temporarily in order to get back on track. Progress will not necessarily be linear. You can help by encouraging careful hygiene, following the physical/social distancing recommendations, encouraging people to stay at home if they have any symptoms of illness, and to cooperate with contact tracers if they are diagnosed.

In Phase IV of the diocesan plan, we will follow these guidelines:

- High-risk individuals - whether staff, volunteers, or program participants - are allowed to resume normal activities with physical distancing. Provide options for high-risk individuals who still do not feel comfortable attending in-person activities and do all in your power to make them comfortable with that decision, accepted and honored for it, and made as much a part of the community through other means as are practically possible.
- High-risk populations are currently defined by CDC as: persons 65 years of age and older; people of all ages with underlying medical conditions (particularly not well controlled), including people with chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma, people who have serious heart conditions, people who are immunocompromised, people with severe obesity, people with diabetes, people with chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis, and people with liver disease; people who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility.
- Wear cloth face masks while at church and in community ministry, as is recommended in public spaces.
- Worship:
 - We recommend that churches of all sizes offer in-person and remote/online options. See earlier phases for rationale.
 - While physical distancing may be relaxed, we recommend that you avoid crowding in the sanctuary to the extent possible. Consider continuing to offer multiple services, as people may want to spread out.
 - Watch for our office changing guidelines on Communion/Eucharist as we reach this phase. This is the phase where we might get as close to where we were with Eucharist.
 - Watch for public health recommendations and the Office of the Bishop's guidelines on group singing as we arrive at this phase. We will continue to monitor all of our sources including the CDC and Washington's public health officials and offer updates.
 - You may consider passing the offering plate. However, you might want to continue some of the practices we have learned and adapted to in this crisis.
 - You can resume a fellowship/coffee hour in this phase, being careful to clean before and after.
- Office functions could resume as normal, with attention to cleaning.
- Groups, teams, and committees could meet in person.
- Other group and overnight travel can resume.

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Appendix: A Guide for Funerals, Graveside Services, and Weddings During This Pandemic

Issued May 4, 2020

Introduction

For Christians, gathering to mourn the dead, celebrate their life, and proclaim the hope of Resurrection are essential practices of our faith. During the extraordinary circumstances of the COVID19-outbreak, our usual mourning rituals have been interrupted. We think of the women on that first Easter who went to follow their familiar mourning ritual to anoint Jesus's body, only to find it disrupted. We remember their initial shock and confusion and feel this, too. We're waiting to feel the hope of Resurrection. In times of trial like the death of a loved one, we turn to the familiar practices from our faith and ancestors.

These guidelines offer some basic principles. We also know that no guide can perfectly account for every scenario. We trust you to make wise pastoral judgement that errs on the side of safety for vulnerable populations, especially elders and those who are immunocompromised. We will not risk more deaths in the celebration of life. These guidelines are hard and necessary to limit the spread of the virus. Abide by them. We believe the good news of life in Christ Jesus can be proclaimed in every circumstance, even this one.

Create a policy for your church that can be standard for the deaths in your congregation and community through the outbreak. As congregational leaders, you have already made a thousand small decisions each and every day during this crisis. Clergy and leaders need a policy to minimize more decisions. Don't wear out clergy, Eucharistic ministers, and other sacramental ministers by making different decisions for every single case. Set the policy now and abide by it.

Pastoral Concerns After Death

1. **Begin funeral planning remotely.** While our best and most familiar pastoral work often happens in person, this pandemic calls for us to physically distance. Many of you have been doing this already. This feels contrary to everything we know as Christians, as Jesus draws close to those who suffer. Name explicitly these extraordinary circumstances, and how you would wish to be physically present, but out of care for their lives, you will be doing the funeral planning remotely. We know this is hard and not ideal. Keep your pastoral care and planning to phone, email, and video.

2. **Acknowledge the pain.** The family and friends of the deceased, of course, will be upset by this death, and as the awareness sets in, they may be doubly upset by the prospect of a funeral that is not as they imagined it. Acknowledge their pain, expectations, and disappointment. When appropriate, share our guidelines.
3. **Appeal to external authorities.** If there is resistance to the modified liturgy and timeline, appeal to the external authorities of state and federal guidelines, in addition to this guide and the policy from your church. Following the policy is an act of compassion and an affirmation of life for the living. We put these policies in place to keep other people alive.
4. **Presume we're all doing the best that we can.** Be gracious with yourself and others. Operate with the presumption that everyone is doing the best that they can, and so extend extra grace. This is really, really hard. Folks are taxed emotionally and financially. As best you can, let as much as you can go. This is not business as usual, and so we're all going to have to be flexible. Invite the family into this flexibility, even in their grief.
5. **Delay some rituals.** There's a tree called a "Service Berry." Folklore says it got its name because it didn't bloom until the ground had thawed enough that you could bury a body and have a service. We have always delayed some rituals. Cremation is one such way to delay some Christian practices for some communities. Another possibility is an immediate family funeral or graveside service now, and possibly a larger memorial service later. And, we may end up in a situation where the number and frequency of deaths exceeds pastoral capacity. You could say, "We can have a conversation after June 1 (or some later date) about when to have a later memorial service."
6. **Find ways to "stay connected in this time of uncertainty, to one another, and to the One who is our source and strength."** Gather the physical addresses of the immediate family members when you meet. Are there members of your congregations who can be drafted into service in card writing? Can there be a calendar of people who can call the family on designated days? A video conference call "wake" for a time of remembrances and storytelling? Can you print extra copies of a bulletin to send to family members who cannot gather in person? Can you post a copy of the program online? Can these tasks be delegated out to other members of the community as you do the work of caring for the grieving family in new and different ways?
7. **Overcommunicate.** In your newsletters to the congregation, in your homily at a graveside service, and in the emails to the family, repeat and reiterate how hard and complicated this is.

Logical Concerns for a Funeral During COVID-19

1. Be in regular contact with your local funeral home. Your local funeral home will have new guidelines from the Funeral Directors Association and the state that guide their work. Collaborate and know your limits. Be clear and upfront about expenses, including your time. As best you can, care for the funeral home staff.

2. Make a list of the no more than seven people who will attend the funeral service or graveside (the priest and funeral director/cemetery staff should be included in the limit of 10). With the family, make a list of who they would like to have physically present, naming only those who are well enough to attend. Acknowledge the pain of this work and affirm the act of compassion it is to self-limit. Encourage social distancing as much as possible here too. Members of the same household can be close as they presumably already are at home, but a relative visiting from out of town might be encouraged to keep their distance for their safety and that of others. The same applies to church volunteers, members of the clergy, etc. Suggest ways above (#6) to connect more broadly.
3. Communicate clear guidelines to your church and community. This is unbelievably hard, but you need to overcommunicate to your congregation that they may not attend any part of the funeral. Share with the family and your church that they must resist the urge to gather unmasked either outside the funeral home, outside the church, or at the graveside. It is important to safeguard the health of others by preventing interactions as much as possible. Similarly, discourage members of the community from visiting grieving family members in person as a stream of one-on-one visits to the house is nearly as risky as a large group gathering of the same total number. There's nothing special that makes nine people safe and 10 dangerous, it's about contacting as few people as possible during this outbreak.
4. If possible, set up a live-stream of the funeral. Ask if this is desired. Could you set up a private link or offer an option that is password protected? Who else in your community can be in charge of this work so you can be attending to the needs of the gathered community?
5. Limit the variables. If you wear yourself out, you will get sick. You cannot do every single thing for every single funeral. Pastoral compassion can also run into compassion fatigue. Please limit the number of variables. Do you really have enough volunteers to hold a wake and a funeral? This may mean saying to a family, "I am so very sorry. We cannot do this at this time." Knowing that we are finite and limited is an acknowledgement that we are not God.
6. Learn new gestures to minimize your physical contact. Keep your Bible/prayer book/iPad in your hands at all times. Tell the family in advance that for your safety and theirs you will minimize physical contact. This will feel painful and strange. Put out hand sanitizer and individual tissues. Wash your hands again and again. One of the reasons to not have a large gathering is that it is so hard to limit physical contact when we are grieving. We do not want to be the priest policing the hugging and weeping of the mourners.
7. Follow established protocols for cleaning the church. You know this, but pews, handrails, communion rail, etc. - anywhere where anyone has been must be cleaned.

Considerations for someone who has died from COVID-19: You know this, but do not shame or condemn those who have died from COVID-19. The CDC has questions and answers for someone

who has died from COVID-19 here. There are currently no known risks of attending a funeral of someone who has died from COVID-19, and we do not know all of the ways the disease spreads. Current CDC recommendations state “People should consider not touching the body of someone who has died of COVID-19. Older people and people of all ages with severe underlying health conditions are at higher risk of developing serious COVID-19 illness. There may be less of a chance of the virus spreading from certain types of touching, such as holding the hand or hugging after the body has been prepared for viewing.” CDC has additional recommendations for particular religious practices around shrouding, wrapping, and washing the body.

Sample Policy

SAMPLE FUNERAL POLICY FOR _____ CHURCH DURING COVID-19

For Christians, gathering to mourn the dead, celebrate their life, and proclaim the hope of Resurrection are essential practices of our faith. During the extraordinary circumstances of the COVID-19 outbreak, our usual mourning rituals have been interrupted. We think of those women on that first Easter, who went to follow their familiar mourning ritual to anoint Jesus’s body, only to find it disrupted. We remember their initial shock and confusion and feel it too. We’re waiting to feel the hope of Resurrection. In times of trial like the death of a loved one, we turn to the familiar practices and rituals of our faith and ancestors. And so, we know that this disruption for a grieving community is doubly hard. We grieve this disruption with you.

The State of Washington and the Diocese of Olympia are currently under a Phase In plan for reopening and for gatherings. Until the public health emergency is lifted for Washington, we will be limited in our funeral practices in the following ways:

Viewing/Wake:

We advise against having an in-person wake or a viewing during this pandemic. The potential for large gatherings and contact is too high. Churches would need many volunteers/ushers to do impossible work of policing the casket, forbidding touching of the casket, preventing hugging of the family, limiting access of fewer than ten at a time into the church, lining up outside with appropriate distancing, restringing seating in the church, and cleaning of the church. The logistical and safety considerations are too great.

We are able to host a virtual wake at this time.

We are not able to accommodate a wake at this time.

Funeral:

We advise a graveside service outdoors rather than a funeral at the church if at all possible.

We are able to host a funeral service at the church but only allow eight people in the sanctuary (and we are able to live-stream the service).

We are not able to host a funeral service at the church at this time.

Graveside:

We recommend graveside memorial services outdoors where possible as a preferred venue, so as to limit the possible surfaces and spaces as sources of contamination.

We are able to host a graveside service outdoors and require that all people practice social distancing of six feet between one another. We are able to accommodate seven healthy people present.

We are able to host a graveside service outdoors, require that all seven healthy people practice social distancing of six feet between one another, and we can stream the graveside service.

We are not able to host a graveside service outdoors at this time.

Receptions:

We advise against the church hosting a reception after the service during this pandemic. The logistical and safety considerations are too great in hosting at the church and cooking on site. Family should limit the size of any home gathering to avoid spreading the virus and postpone a larger memorial meal to a time when the crisis is past.

We are not able to host a meal following the funeral at this time.

While we are limited in what we are able to host at this time, we are able to plan for memorials after the pandemic has passed. We would welcome the opportunity to host a memorial service for your loved one at a later date when we can all safely gather and celebrate their life.

Bottom Line:

- No more than 10 people including priest, funeral director, cemetery workers, and those in attendance;
- Face masks should be worn by all in attendance;
- Social distancing should be exercised precisely and carefully;
- No handshakes or hugs; and
- No reception after.

Weddings During the Pandemic

Much of the same thinking on funerals applies to weddings/blessings as well.

- Consider doing pre-marital counseling by Zoom, but in-person, with appropriate distancing, is okay.
- Keep the number of people present below 10 total - including the couple, officiant, witnesses, guests, photographer, et al. State law requires two witnesses and an officiant be present. Consider limiting the altar party to the couple, officiant, and witnesses.
- Any guests present must be in church seating, sitting six feet apart.
- No receptions in the church following the ceremony.
- The usual contact, “tying of the knot,” physical touching for a blessing, should be avoided.
- Rings could be handled only by the couple and not also by the priest. These could be blessed without touching.
- Consider avoiding or limiting processions down the aisle, adjacent to where others are sitting.
- No Eucharist at weddings until Phase IV.