



ST. PETER'S

EPISCOPAL CHURCH

A Modified Return to Congregational Life: Diocesan Protocols and Guidelines

Introduction

We continue to persevere through these challenging times, and yes, we have been forced to adapt to what could be called a “new abnormal.” Nevertheless, you and I remain steadfast and faithful to the two great commandments from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ: Love God and love your neighbor.

In one of his recent letters to the Diocese, Bishop Reed reminded us, “Our governing principle throughout this pandemic has been to love God and to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. We have sacrificed practices that are important to us, like public worship, for the love and safety of our neighbors in church and our neighbors in the larger community.”

We are wired for connection, and we long for in-person congregational life *because we love our neighbor*. We will return to a *modified* form of in-person congregational life *because we love our neighbor*. That which you and I do differently can be done for the well-being of the person we are called to love. The protocols to be put in place are because we desire to return to in-person congregational life and we will do so with concern for our neighbor.

We know the risk of the disease cannot be eliminated, but it can be minimized. We will implement the following protocols to reduce the risk, and we will do so with love for our neighbor. Remember, dearly beloved, we are knit together in love.

Protocols for Facilities

- Staff or designated volunteers will clean and disinfect any regularly touched surfaces frequently during ‘business hours’ and at the end or beginning of the day (ex. doorknobs, tables, chairs, and restroom facilities). The staff will use Vital Oxide and Arcot for cleaning and disinfecting.
- The staff or designated volunteers will disinfect seats and/or pews between all gatherings.
- Staff or designated volunteers will disinfect any items that come into contact with attendees.
- Hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, soap and water, or similar disinfectants will be readily available.

- Easily visible signs explaining hygiene best practices will be placed around the campus (use bilingual signs or signs for young children, as needed).
- No meals, food, or drinks (coffee) of any kind will be provided.

Protocols for Employees and Volunteers

- All employees and volunteers will be trained on appropriate cleaning and disinfection, hand hygiene, and respiratory etiquette.
- All employees and volunteers will be trained not to shake hands or embrace attendees.
- Employees and volunteers will be screened (see below) before coming into the church, congregation, or place of gatherings for potential signs of illness.

- Any employee or volunteer who has any of the following new or worsening signs and symptoms of possible COVID-19 will be sent home:

- Cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, diarrhea, feeling feverish or a measured temperature greater than or equal to 100.0 degrees Fahrenheit, known close contact with a person who is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19.

- Employees or volunteers with any new or worsening signs and symptoms, listed above, will be prevented from returning to work until the following criteria are met:

- For an employee or volunteer diagnosed with COVID-19: the individual may return to work when all three of the following criteria are met: at least three days (72 hours) have passed since recovery (resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications); respiratory symptoms improve (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); and at least 7 days have passed since symptoms first appeared;
- For an employee or volunteer who has symptoms that could be COVID-19, but does not get evaluated by a medical professional or tested for COVID-19: the individual is assumed to have COVID-19 and cannot return to work until the individual meeting the same three-step criteria listed above;
- For an employee or volunteer who has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and wants to return to work before completing the above self-isolation period: the individual must obtain a medical professional's note clearing the individual for return based on an alternative diagnosis.

- An employee or volunteer with known close contact to a person who is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19 will not be allowed to return to work until the end of the 14-day self-quarantine period, from the last date of exposure.

- Employees or volunteers are required to wash or sanitize their hands upon entering church facilities.
- Employees or volunteers are required to maintain at least 6 feet of separation from other individuals.
- Employees, volunteers, and attendees will be asked to wear cloth face coverings or non-medical grade face masks over their nose and mouth.
- When attendees are present, face masks are required (detailed below, see Protocols for Protecting Attendees).
- People who are in the at-risk population will be encouraged to refrain from volunteering and attending gatherings.
- Social distancing and other forms of protection will be used by clergy, when with others.

Protocols for Protecting Attendees

In-Person Gatherings Other Than Worship Services

- In-person gatherings will be limited to Tucker Hall and the St. Peter's courtyard. We encourage groups to consider meeting outdoors before choosing to meet in Tucker Hall.
- In-person gatherings will be limited to parish groups for the time being. The use of facilities by outside groups will remain suspended.
- Before a group can meet on campus, the ministry group leader must complete the request form and receive confirmation from the church office.
- We strongly encourage our congregation's at-risk population to participate in church activities remotely.
- Childcare services *will not* be provided at this time. Whenever we resume with childcare services, we will update our protocols, following rigorous health and sanitization protocols and ensuring that open restrooms have adequate and available cleaning supplies for any diaper changing stations.
- We will ensure proper spacing between attendees by asking attendees to:
 - Keep at least six feet separation, approximately the width of two seats, between parties in any row, except two or more members of the same household can sit adjacent to one another, with six feet empty on either side of the group.
 - Sit only in the designated areas which have been arranged for social distancing.
- We strongly encourage that all attendees wear a mask or face-covering. We encourage attendees to do so in the spirit of loving our neighbor.
 - We will give masks to attendees who show up without one.
- We strongly discourage attendees from engaging in any physical contact with each other whatsoever, including shaking hands, hugging, fist-bumping, high-fiving, etc. whether in the building or elsewhere on church premises.
- We will prop open doors inside the building and to the outside, so that no attendee has to touch a doorknob or handle.

- If necessary or preferred, we will assign volunteers or staff to open and close doors for individuals as they come in and out.
- We will mark any locked interior or exterior doors, so that attendees do not try to open them.
- Public surfaces that are touched will be sanitized before, in between, and after each gathering. This includes doorknobs, tables, chairs, contact areas in restrooms, Bibles, books, etc.
- We encourage providing online/digital materials where possible.
- We discourage gathering for conversation and fellowship after a group meets.

**** Given the risk involved in removing a mask to consume food or beverages, fellowship meals, coffee hours before or after services, and refreshments during a meeting or gathering are still suspended.***