

May 7, 2020

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As social distancing restrictions are relaxed here in South Carolina, it's important to think carefully about how and when we move toward the resumption of public worship as a Diocese. As the deanery clericus conversations the past few weeks have clearly revealed, this is a complicated challenge.

Therefore, the conditions under which the Bishop will allow public worship to resume are detailed in the attached Guidelines. It is the first step in what we anticipate will be a multi-phased process. These are meant to provide boundaries for each parish to make plans that are fitting for their community. They will be updated periodically as conditions dictate. They go into effect Sunday, May 17, though no church is compelled to begin public worship on that date. Anyone wishing to do so must submit a written plan to the Bishop's office, following these guidelines, five days in advance.

Also enclosed is an example of how a parish may communicate implementation of these guidelines.

As we seek to understand the restrictions and allowances of the Bishop's guidelines, it may be helpful to think about three principle issues:

**1. The Nature of the Problem.** Much of what we need to know to make good decisions about resuming public worship remains unknown. What is certain is that much of its spread is by asymptomatic carriers. That makes containment far more difficult and far more dangerous for those who are vulnerable. As we seek to "love our neighbor as ourselves", there is a cost involved. We have a responsibility to manage the risks of public gatherings for now, primarily by managing time and distance. Out of love for our neighbors, risk must be addressed because for some, this virus poses significant danger.

**2. The Nature of our Circumstances.** Every parish faces unique local circumstances. There are significant differences in the sizes of our congregations, their demographics, their local communities and the spaces in which we worship. All of these contribute to the risks and perceptions of risk involved in public worship. And we also vary greatly in our ability to modify those risks. There is no one solution that will work well for all of the Diocese.

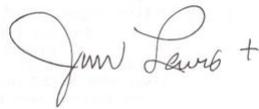
**3. The Realities of Government Guidance.** If we wish to have a credible claim to loving our neighbor, we must be aware of and abide by the guidance of the CDC, state and local authorities. As those entrusted with public safety, we need to respect their directives, if only as an

affirmation of our reverence for the common good in this public crisis. Our actions should give no one in our local communities cause to doubt that commitment.

In addition to the enclosed guidelines, we suggest you also familiarize yourself with the [CDC guidelines](#) for religious communities, as well as resources such as those at the [Anglican Compass](#) to inform your planning.

We recognize these guidelines will have different possible implications for every congregation and will need to be adapted accordingly. If you have questions for clarification or need help in any way, clergy may contact the Rev. Canon Jim Lewis or the Rev. Marcus Kaiser.

In Christ's service,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jim Lewis" followed by a small cross symbol.

The Rev. Canon Jim Lewis  
Canon to the Ordinary

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "M Kaiser" followed by a small cross symbol.

The Rev. Marcus Kaiser  
President of the Standing Committee

# **Enclosure #1**

## **Guidelines for Resuming Indoor Public Worship**

*(as of May 7, 2020)*

### **Requirements:**

- Communion in one kind (bread only), received in the hand
- Pre-consecrated host is also permissible.
- Masks required inside buildings. Those leading worship (celebrant, lay readers, musicians and singers) may remove their masks to exercise their specific roles if adequate distance from parishioners makes this safe.
- Minimum 6 foot distance between family units and individuals for seating and receiving communion
- [No congregational singing](#)
- If at all possible, continue online services
- Sick parishioners must stay at home
- No separate Children's Church or Nursery
- No coffee hour or other group fellowship and classes (remain online)
- No physical contact (handshakes, hugs, etc...)
- No passing of the offering plate
- If using an altar rail for Communion, must have a method for sanitizing between communicants
- If more than one service on a day, must have method for sanitizing between services
- Require social distancing when dismissing the congregation
  - o It may be necessary to dismiss by row/section or use multiple exits

### **Recommendations:**

- Consider Morning Prayer as primary service for now
- If celebrating Communion, consider standing stations
- Consider outdoor worship where possible
- Those who are 65 and over should recognize they are in the high-risk category
- Those with underlying health conditions should be encouraged to stay home
- Consider surveying parishioners ahead of time to anticipate attendance. Consider 25% of capacity as the upper limit for building utilization. You may need to assign service times or provide seating cards to accommodate larger numbers.
- Encourage online giving and tithing as a way of further minimizing the need for the offering plate.
- Worshippers are to use the parish restrooms only if absolutely necessary and encourage members to bring and use their own hand sanitizer
- To the degree you can, improve ventilation
- Consider multiple services or service venues to increase social distancing
- Consider making adjustments to service to shorten length
- Consider bulletins and prayer book usage
  - o If possible, words projected on screen is ideal
  - o If not, use printed, one-use bulletins placed in seats ahead of time

**Enclosure #2**  
**Guidelines for Outdoor Public Worship**  
*(as of May 7, 2020)*

**Requirements:**

- If singing increased social distancing to 10' between family units
- Communion in one kind (bread only), received in the hand
- Pre-consecrated host is also permissible.
- Masks only required inside buildings and interactions other parishioners
- If at all possible, continue online services
- Sick parishioners must stay at home
- No separate Children's Church or Nursery
- No coffee hour or other group fellowship and classes (remain online)
- No physical contact (handshakes, hugs, etc...)
- No passing of the offering plate
- Any hard surfaces must be sanitized between services
- Require social distancing when dismissing the congregation

**Recommendations:**

- Consider Morning Prayer as primary service for now
- If celebrating Communion, consider standing stations
- Consider having a drive-in area for more at risk parishioners
- Those who are 65 and over should recognize they are in the high-risk category
- Those with underlying health conditions should be encouraged to stay home
- Consider surveying parishioners ahead of time to anticipate attendance. You may need to assign service times to accommodate larger numbers.
- Encourage online giving and tithing as a way of further minimizing the need for the offering plate.
- Worshippers are to use the parish restrooms only if absolutely necessary and encourage members to bring and use their own hand sanitizer
- Consider multiple services to increase social distancing
- Consider making adjustments to service to shorten length
- Consider bulletins and prayer book usage and the need to sanitize after use

## Enclosure #3

# Example Parish Guidelines and Communication

My Dear [Parish] Family,

I write with joy to tell you about some loosening of the restrictions under which we have been worshiping for the past two months. **Beginning on May 24<sup>th</sup>**, we will have **one service in the Church** on Sundays at 10:30AM. For the near future, this will be **in addition to the online offerings** that we have streamed on Sundays at 11AM.

We pray that this next season will be the beginning of the recovery phase from the social restrictions, but the coast is certainly not clear. Therefore, we will be following best practices and the guidance of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the requirements and recommendations of our diocese. Here are some things that we will ask of you, and some things that, we will require.

### What we strongly urge of you:

- **Please register** at [www.website.com/register](http://www.website.com/register) by Friday, May 22<sup>nd</sup> to let us know you intend to participate on Sunday during in-person worship. This will give us an idea of how many to expect, and whether we need to add services or facilities.
- If you are in an **at-risk category** (over 65 years of age or have underlying health concerns), please consider staying home and worshiping with us online. Those online services will continue during this intermediate phase.
- Please **wear a mask at all times**, except when immediately taking Communion (more on Communion later).
  - o Unfortunately, we cannot provide masks for everyone, so please bring your own
- Please use the restrooms only in an emergency

### What is required:

- **If you are sick, particularly if you have a fever, you must stay at home.**
- **Sit only with your family. Individuals** should remain separated by at least 6 feet if on the same pew.
- When dismissed, **exit by row** following the ushers' instructions. Depending on what part of the sanctuary in which you're seated, you will be directed to a specific exit.
- **Maintain social distancing and proper hygiene.**

### A few other things you should know as we enter this next temporary phase:

- While are in this phase, we will be offering **Morning Prayer** in an abbreviated format (35-45 minutes) except for a similarly brief Holy Communion once a month. (When we offer Communion, it will be with the same or similar precautions as we used when we distributed on May 3<sup>rd</sup>.)
- For now, we will not use bulletins or prayer books, but **we will project the service.**
- There will be **no Children's Church or Nursery.**
- **Every other pew** will be marked off limits, so as not to exceed the guidance from the CDC on occupational capacity.
- There will be **no music** on Sunday mornings, but the Chancel Singers will continue to provide music for the on-line worship. This is both in keeping with CDC guidelines and in order to keep the service brief.

- Again, we will continue to provide **Morning Prayer online**, just as we have, at [www.youtube.com/"churchname"](http://www.youtube.com/) and [www.facebook.com/"churchname"](http://www.facebook.com/)
- Outside of these Sunday worship services, the **church facilities remain closed** to all other functions until further notice.
- If the we exceed our ability to keep our social distance with the alternating pews, we will begin to direct people to the Parish Hall, where the service will be streamed to the large screen.

Having said all of that, I know that these restrictions will be awkward for all of us. Furthermore, I fully recognize that some will feel that we are being far too cautious, while others will no doubt feel that any physical gathering is reckless. I acknowledge, understand, and sympathize with both ends of that spectrum. Still, the plan laid out above is one a team of our parishioners and clergy have developed after careful prayer and in consultation with our bishop and governmental authorities. We are confident it will be an interim step.

One final and related note: As I previously wrote, we are working through a plan to provide online services even after this crisis has passed. Indeed, the vestry has authorized just that, but it is going to cost between \$5,000 and \$8,000 to achieve. Most of that cost is in equipment to be able to live-stream our regular Sunday morning services, but some of it is in some minor remodeling to make that unobtrusive. This is unbudgeted, but we believe online broadcasting will continue to be a vital part of our outreach for years to come. I am so humbled by how faithful in giving you have all been, but if you have been blessed by the online worship we have provided, please consider making a designated gift to help that continue.

In closing, please know that I do not consider this modified worship schedule, either online or in-person, to be an adequate or long-term solution. It weighs heavily on my heart – both that we must continue to maintain distance and that any of you might be at risk. Still, we must face reality as it is. Although imperfect, this next step will hopefully bring us closer to that day, not far off, when we can gather together as a family to pray, hear God’s Word, keep the feast, and sing his praise. In the meantime, know that I love you, I miss you, and I can’t wait to see every one of you again, face to face, as soon as the Lord allows.

Yours in Christ Jesus,

The Rev. John Cleric  
Rector