



Gathering for Abundant Life: Arizona Church and Worship in the time of COVID-19

“I came that they might have life, and have it abundantly.” (John 10:10)

The work, ministry, and worship of our congregations in Arizona is continuing in new ways through the COVID-19 pandemic. Our congregations have not been able to gather face to face, but we have never closed or stopped being the Church. So we are not calling this a re-opening. We are setting out the guidelines for how we will gather in the world in which we find ourselves, and how we will gather safely, caring for the life of every member of our flock.

It is important to recognize that this is not a world that we have chosen to live in, or limitations that we take pleasure in imposing. We know that worship services elsewhere have been “superspreader” events that resulted in many deaths in the immediate worshipping community, and a spike in infections in the surrounding area, and commit ourselves to loving our neighbors by valuing their lives.

We grieve the loss of many core aspects of our worship and our community for the immediate future. We also continue to hope that those core aspects of worship and community which we are unable to do now will be restored to us eventually. Life may not feel abundant for a while. But God’s blessings will continue to abound, even when we don’t feel them.

The Task Force will continue to amend and develop this document as we live into it over the next months.

One important note to highlight: at any phase, if a church member or staff person who has been in the church building or with church members tests positive for COVID-19, the infected individual should notify the priest. The Priest, or staff, should notify everyone who was present in the worship service or event that someone at the gathering had COVID-19. They should be advised to contact their doctor. The Priest and staff should not identify the person who tested positive for COVID-19. The Church will immediately go back to Phase I for at least the next 14 days and will need to do a substantive cleaning of any affected areas of the building at least 72 hours after the last contact. Some or all churches may also return to Phase I due to increased infection rates in your area or Arizona as a whole.

Task Force Committee:

The Right Rev. Jennifer A. Reddall, Bishop
The Rev. Gerardo Brambila, St. Mark’s, Mesa
The Rev. Taylor Devine, St. Philip’s in the Hills,
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The Rev. Bruce Jackson, St. John the Baptist,
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Dr. Gerry Kato, Trinity Cathedral, Phoenix
Kym Kennedy, St. John’s, Bisbee

Canon Clyde Kunz, Church of St. Matthew, Tucson
Dr. Richard Neff, Church of the Epiphany, Flagstaff
The Rev. Erika von Haaren, St. Barnabas on the
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Staff Members:

Canon Cathy Black
The Rev. Canon Anita Braden
Canon Bill Potts



Phase I

Phase I External Indicators

- Increasing rates of COVID-19 Infection
- Overburdened medical resources
- State and local “Stay at Home” orders

Phase I Guidelines for Church Ministry

- Offices may be open with very few staff
- Essential ministries (food banks, direct service, blood drives, 12 step meetings) may continue, with reduction of volunteers as you are able, all volunteers wearing masks, and thorough cleaning after activities.
- Christian Formation for all ages offered online

Phase I Guidelines for Worship

- No indoor in-person worship or meetings with more than 10 people present
- Online worship recommended
- Funerals, weddings, and ordinations of less than 10 people permitted, with masks and social distancing between participants.
- Emergency baptisms only
- Outdoor worship with masks, social distancing between family group, and following all other Phase II protocols for worship, music, and restroom use is permitted.



Phase II

In order for a congregation to move into Phase II, their Bishop's Committee or Vestry must prepare a plan for how they are going to enact the guidelines below in their congregation's context, submit it to Bishop Reddall and the Task Force by emailing it to Canon Cathy Black at cathy@azdiocese.org, and receive approval from Bishop Reddall.

Phase II External Indicators

- Arizona Department of Health guidelines for safe school openings are met in your congregation's county. You can look this up at <https://www.azdhs.gov/preparedness/epidemiology-disease-control/infectious-disease-epidemiology/index.php#novel-coronavirus-schools>
- ***Please note that until we have a vaccine that is widely administered, there is no way to absolutely ensure safety of those who gather together.***
- Individuals over age 60 and those with the following “pre-existing conditions” are particularly vulnerable to the effects of COVID-19 disease and may be wise to stay home and continue to worship online during Phase II.
 - Uncontrolled diabetes
 - Asthma
 - Hypertension
 - History of lung disease
 - Immune system compromised
 - Undergoing chemotherapy

Phase II General Guidelines for Churches

- **All people attending worship or any other events on church property must wear masks over their noses and mouths.**
- Offices can be open with staff staying appropriate distance from one another.
- Place anti-bacterial hand sanitizer dispensers at all entrances and in all restrooms. If you do not have these on hand, order them now so you will be ready to open in the future.
- Make Kleenex and covered trash receptacles available in several accessible places
- Acquire and plan for having masks on hand for people who did not bring a mask to church. Order them or have members make extras that can be given away.
- No Coffee Hour, congregational meals, or events involving food.
- To start Phase II, no Sunday School, children's ministry
- Junior and Senior High Youth gatherings of up to 10 people indoors and up to 20 people outdoors can take place, so long as youth and leaders remain masked and socially distanced. No food is currently allowed at youth events.
- Continue to offer Bible Study and Christian formation online as you are able; small groups of 10 or fewer people may meet in person for formation if they meet in a room of sufficient size to maintain six feet of distance between them.



- Exercise and yoga classes can take place outdoors, so long as participants are able to distance from one another and wear masks.
- For church schools, preschools, and daycares: follow the guidelines and recommendations of the Arizona Department of Education and the National Association of Episcopal Schools.

Phase II Guidelines for Worship

- It is essential that congregations continue online worship for those who cannot attend in person during Phase II.
- For the beginning of Phase II, worship capacity will be limited to the lower of either 50 people or 25% of the legal occupancy of your sanctuary to allow for safe social distancing in the church. For most congregations, that means that not all members will be able to attend at the same time. Options include:
 - Offering more services spread out through the weekend (with cleaning after each service)
 - Establishing a process to divide the congregation up into smaller groups for worship: reservations, a lottery, alphabetical assignments, etc.
 - Endeavor to try to leave a space or two for visitors to your congregation.
 - Outdoor worship is permitted for as many people as can safely meet while observing social distancing between family groups, and following all other Phase II protocols for worship, music, masking, etc.
- If there is only one service, consider waiting to clean the church for 72 hours after the service to prevent infection for the cleaning crew. Current evidence suggests that COVID-19 remains viable for several hours to days on surfaces.
- Maintain six feet distance between family groups at all times.
- Baptismal fonts and holy water stoops must be drained.
- Remove items from pew racks: Prayer Books, Hymnals, handouts, pencils, etc.
- Acolyte robes that are shared should be washed after each use, and robes that are used by one individual should not be stored with robes used by others.
- Baptisms, weddings, and funerals: may be done in accordance with guidelines and limited by size of gathering to what would otherwise be allowable.
- The safest worship service is spoken Morning or Evening Prayer. Congregations with a high percentage of vulnerable people should consider offering those services rather than the Holy Eucharist during Phase II.
- Minimize the touching of items for following worship, which could mean:
 - A single-use bulletin that includes hymn texts and congregational responses, set out on a table rather than handed out one by one
 - Encouraging members to bring their own Books of Common Prayer (or giving each member one to bring when they worship)
 - Using a downloadable bulletin on members' tablets and phones
 - Projecting prayers and responses on screens



- Think through your entrance and exit procedures: who will ensure that people are wearing masks and keeping distancing? How will you let people leave worship to ensure there is no line at the door? Where can clergy stand to greet people that does not block an exit?
- The role of ushers/greeters is critical in this phase. They must be respected, able to be firm with parishioners, and welcoming to people who are lonely and isolated. Consider who is called to this ministry at this time.
- Consider your plans for restroom access and cleaning.
- Consider closing off any parts of the church that are not in use
- If your congregation meets in a building that you do not own, you must clean surfaces prior to your worship service.
- No processions down aisles that would bring ministers within six feet of worshippers.
- Music: One of the hardest recognitions of this Task Force is that given what we currently know, there is no safe way to permit choir or congregational singing. If there is room in your church or at outdoor worship, you may have up to four singers, each spaced at least 20 feet from any other person, all wearing masks while singing. We recommend masks specifically designed for singing, such as those you may purchase at <https://www.broadwayreliefproject.com/singersmask> or https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8UNTP-m_K4E for a pattern. Otherwise, only instrumental music on the organ, string instruments, or percussion is permitted. No music by other wind instruments at this time. We encourage your creativity with finding ways for singers to continue to minister through music online, and for choirs to maintain their relationships and community.

Specific Guidelines for the Eucharist

- Communion will be offered in one kind (bread) to the congregation.
- No passing the Peace with physical touching.
- No passing of offering plates; put an offering plate in a central location where congregants can drop their offerings; continue to encourage online giving.
- The Celebrant and any ministers who are distributing communion will wash their hands with soap and water, or use hand sanitizer immediately prior to the prayer of consecration. The Celebrant must wear a mask during the prayer of consecration.
- If a Eucharistic minister touches the hand of someone they are distributing communion to, they should stop, and go wash or sanitize their hands.
- Please use only communion wafers and not bread that will be torn or divided.
- Communion must be distributed while congregants are standing (i.e., not kneeling at an altar rail) and at a station where a six-foot distance is kept between those waiting.
- Those distributing communion must wear masks.
- Remind congregants to please not touch the minister's hands when receiving communion.

Guidelines for emergency in-home pastoral visits during Phase II:

Clergy may visit shut-ins who desire a pastoral visit under the following conditions:



- Prior to the visit, the clergy will contact the caregiver or church member to ensure that the conditions below can be met.
- Visits outside on a patio are ideal if the weather permits.
- Both the visitor and the visited do not have any symptoms of COVID-19.
- The clergy must wear an N95 mask, throughout the visit.
- During the visit, there is at least 6 feet distance between people.
- Eucharist may be shared with only the person being visited partaking of the wine.

Phase II.5

The Diocese of Arizona would rather add ministries and practices to our congregations as we move forward in the future rather than having to stop ministries and practices that have already regathered. To that end, we are creating a category of ministries in what we are calling “Phase II.5” which may be permitted once we are well into Phase II and understand more about transmission patterns of COVID-19, have reliable antibody testing, and/or have successfully lowered local infection rates to a point where we are able to expand upon our ministry. The Task Force will be evaluating these options once we have experience with Phase II. Some of these ministries may be authorized; others may not. They include:

- Expanded size of gatherings to 100 people or 25% of capacity, or further increases in sizes of gatherings beyond those metrics
- Congregational singing and choral singing
- In Person Sunday School and Youth Ministry
- Non-emergency Pastoral Visits by Lay Eucharistic Visitors and Clergy
- Some Coffee Hour and social gatherings
- Additional in-person Christian Formation



Phase III

Phase III External Indicators

We will enter Phase III when there is either a vaccine for COVID-19 or effective methods of treating the virus. Phase III is likely 18-24 months away from us now but could come sooner if a vaccine or treatment becomes available.

Phase III Guidelines for Church Community

- Offices are open
- Ministry around food (coffee hour, socials, potlucks) can resume
- Outside Groups may resume meeting in church buildings
- Unrestricted pastoral visiting
- Full Children, Youth, and Family ministry

Phase III Guidelines for Worship

- No size restrictions on worship services
- Maintain handwashing or sanitizing practices.
- Communion in both kinds for the congregation
- Reception at altar rail permitted
- Congregational singing and choirs resume
- Mask wearing still encouraged, but not required



Worksheet for Congregations Who Wish to Gather for In-Person Worship During Phase II:

This worksheet offers the minimum of questions to be resolved prior to approval for a return to in-person worship. Larger churches, in particular, will need to provide a more substantial plan.

Our Vestry or Bishop's Committee has read and agrees to abide by the guidance of the Diocese of Arizona regarding opening our congregation for worship, including following social distancing and wearing masks during worship.

What has worked well for us in Phase I is: _____

The Phase I practices that we intend to continue during Phase II are: _____

County: _____

The legal maximum occupancy of our worship space is: _____

Therefore, we will not hold any worship gatherings of more than _____ people (25% of maximum occupancy or 50 people, whichever is less).

The people responsible for ensuring that we do not exceed this maximum and that people attending worship abide by our policies are: _____

We will tentatively be offering the following services: _____

Our plan for communicating these plans to our congregation include: _____

Our practices for keeping social distancing during worship include: _____

Our plan for restroom use and cleaning is: _____

Our plan for sanctuary use and cleaning is: _____

Our plan for classes and formation is: _____

Our plan for outreach is: _____

Our plan for pastoral care is: _____

Our plan for use of church facilities by outside groups is: _____

Our plan for music is: _____

Our plan if a member of the congregation, staff, or clergy tests positive for COVID-19 is: _____



Pre-ReOpen Cleaning/Sanitation Suggestions

By Bill Potts, Canon for Finance and Property

A number of online sources have reported that the COVID-19 virus has varying life cycles on surfaces. The Cleveland Clinic suggests the following as a guide for surface life span of the virus:

Glass – 5 days
Wood – 4 Days
Plastic and stainless-steel – 3 days
Cardboard – 24 hours
Copper Surfaces – 4 hours

The CDC also provides some guidelines for regular cleaning and cleaning when infection is present. The following links will provide you with the CDC information:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html#Cleaning-and-Disinfection>

If there has been the presence of the COVID-19 in your building within the past 5 days, your congregation will go back to Phase I for 14 days. Prior to gathering again, you will need to either:

1. Hire a reputable cleaning company to complete a full cleaning of your facility with an emphasis on the use of disinfecting solutions.
2. If hiring a company to clean is not feasible, please...
 - a. clean your facility using disinfecting solutions and materials.
 - b. use gloves at all time during the cleaning process to avoid potential exposure and cross contamination.
 - c. highly concentrate on those areas that will have high usage, (i.e.: door hardware, restroom facilities, water fountains, water coolers, kitchen facilities, etc.)
 - d. If disinfecting cleaning solutions are not readily available in your area, the CDC recommends a cleaning solution of 5 tablespoons (1/3rd cup) of bleach per gallon of water or 4 teaspoons of bleach per quart of water.

You are also encouraged to replace your HVAC filters to at least a MERV 11 (HEPA Filter).



Resources for further reading:

https://www.centerforhealthsecurity.org/our-work/pubs_archive/pubs-pdfs/2020/200417-reopening-guidance-governors.pdf

<https://www.episcopalrelief.org/what-we-do/us-disaster-program/remoteministry/>

<https://www.aei.org/research-products/report/national-coronavirus-response-a-road-map-to-reopening/>

<https://churchleaders.com/pastors/pastor-articles/374906-24-questions-your-church-should-answer-before-people-return.html>

<https://www.azdiocese.org/coronavirus.html>

<https://www.facebook.com/1486909780/posts/10222436713575106/>

<https://www.infectioncontroltoday.com/covid-19/churches-could-be-deadliest-places-covid-19-pandemic>

<https://www.middleclassartist.com/post/nats-panel-of-experts-lays-out-sobering-future-for-singers-no-vaccine-no-safe-public-singing>

WELCOME TO OUR CHURCH

WE ARE DOING
OUR BEST TO
ENSURE THAT
EVERYONE WHO
ENTERS IS KEPT
SAFE AND
HEALTHY.



If you have any of the following symptoms:

- cough
- muscle pain
- shortness of breath
- diarrhea
- rash
- vomiting
- abdominal pain
- fever
- red eye
- weakness
- bruising or bleeding
- new joint pain that is not going away
- severe headache
- lack of sense of smell or sense of taste

OR if in the past month have you been in contact with someone who was confirmed to have COVID-19, please stay at home for 14 days and call your doctor.

All persons entering must be wearing a mask over their nose and mouth, and keep six feet distance between people who are not part of your household.

(Clinical Characteristics of Corona Virus Disease 2019 in China, The New England Journal of Medicine April 30, 2020)