

The Journey Forward:
Revised Guidelines for In-Person Worship and Gatherings
in the Episcopal Diocese of Newark

May 19, 2021

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

Go to [Covid ActNow for New Jersey](https://covidactnow.org/state/NJ) and click on your county (<https://covidactnow.org/state/NJ>)

(The county's color is based on the **highest** risk for any single factor listed.

If only one factor is Red, the county is coded as Red.)

Risk Level	Worship, Weddings, Funerals	Pastoral Care	Meetings or Classes	Social Events	Schools-Tenants-Non-Parish Groups	Journey Forward page reference
Dark Red or Red Extreme or Critical Risk	Maximum of 10 – only those with tasks (worship leaders, tech, etc.); solo vocalist masked	Online or Phone only	No in-person meetings or classes	Online or Phone only	Follow state requirements	p. 10
Orange High Risk	Limited numbers in-person, masks, distanced; limited duration; solo vocalist, masked	Outdoors masked, distanced, otherwise primarily online or phone; follow all institution rules	In-person gatherings discouraged; (if they occur - masked, distanced, brief)	Outdoors masked, distanced. otherwise online or phone only	Follow state requirements	p. 12
Yellow Medium Risk	Increased attendance numbers in-person; masks indoors or when singing; choral/ congregational singing distanced and masked, indoors or outdoors	Indoors or outdoors, masked as needed; follow all institution rules	In-person meetings or classes distanced, masked as needed	Coffee hour outside; limited to attendance maximums, distanced, masked as needed	Follow state requirements	p. 29
Green Low Risk	<i>At this Risk Level, restrictions may be removed.</i> Additional information will be available at a later date.					p. 29

Remember:

Wear Face Coverings as required or needed

Wash Your Hands

Keep a Minimum of 6 Feet Distance

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A Note on Process and How to Use this Document

The Journey Forward Task Force was appointed by Bishop Hughes from churches across the diocese, including both lay and ordained members. They provided an initial document to the Bishop's Office in June 2020, which then incorporated additional revisions from diocesan staff and was released. The Journey Forward Task Force was called back to work and has put forward updated material, necessitating this revised edition, edited by diocesan staff. The current Task Force includes: The Rev. Victoria G. McGrath, Co-Chair; Ms. Patrice McKenzie, Co-Chair; Members Ms. Yvonne Adighibe, Ms. Pamela Fueshko, The Rev. Robert Griner, Ms. Jody Caldwell, The Rev. Thomas Murphy, The Rev. Andrew Olivo, The Rev. Mark R. Collins, Dr. James Sanderson, The Rev. Paula J. Toland, Ms. Amy Fink and is advised by The Rev. Canon Andrew R. Wright, Canon to the Ordinary, and Mr. James Caputo, Diocesan Property and Risk Manager.

Sections: This document has two primary sections. The first contains information about how to follow public health markers to determine Risk Level for your county. Bishop Hughes invites everyone to be mindful of local health trends relating to COVID-19, to make informed decisions in all areas of life, including congregational gatherings. The second section provides information about what to do for gatherings at each Risk Level phase, including guidelines for gathering for in-person worship, indoors or outdoors, and other events. Finally, a few appendices offer more information and resources.

Forms: If your congregation did not re-initiate in-person worship during summer or fall 2020, you will need to fill out an information form to do so, when conditions are safe enough to consider doing that. At the end of this document are the forms for planning in-person worship for outdoors and indoors. These forms need to be filled out and sent to the Bishop's Office (to Canon Andrew Wright awright@dioceseofnewark.org) prior to your first in-person service. If clarifications or corrections are needed, the Bishop's Office will be in touch as soon as possible. Generally, forms should be submitted well before the first Sunday of in-person worship, to allow full communication with the congregation so they know what to expect in worship.

You may have already restarted in-person worship in your congregation this year, having filled out an in-person worship form previously, but find the need to fast from public worship once again due to your county's Risk Level. In that case, you will not need to re-file the same form, but the Bishop's Office asks that you give notification when resuming in-person worship.

State Requirements and Diocesan Guidelines: The State of New Jersey and the Governor's Office will likely continue to make adjustments to the limitations on gatherings, both expanding them and restricting them, according to current metrics for COVID-19 cases. State requirements and limits are always a condition of how we can gather during this time, but diocesan guidelines may be more limited in some ways than the state would allow. When significant changes are made to state requirements and limitations, these guidelines may be updated. Whenever you consider gathering people together, state and diocesan limits should be observed. Keep in mind that more people, sitting in one space, especially indoors for any length of time beyond a few minutes, increases risk. More people, means more opportunities to spread and be exposed to infection.

Introduction

Churches in the Episcopal Diocese of Newark are asked to create a plan of next steps in their congregational life and worship based on the guidelines in this *Journey Forward* document. The plan is to be submitted to the Bishop's Office before any in-person indoor or outdoor gatherings may take place. See the Planning Section for forms to plan indoor or outdoor in-person worship.

These guidelines assume a stance of more, rather than fewer restrictions, out of an abundance of caution for the health and safety of parishioners, staff, clergy, and neighbors. Offering guidance about when some of these practices may be relaxed is difficult because in New Jersey the Governor's Office has used a "rolling" staged approach, rather than a phased approach with specific health and public safety benchmarks.

The State's restart and recovery plan, ["The Road Back: Restoring Economic Health Through Public Health,"](#) has four stages. In each stage more restrictions are lifted based on the following information, but not on specific benchmarks:

"New Jersey will move toward subsequent stages based on data that demonstrates improvements in public health and the capacity to safeguard the public, including:

- Sustained improvements in public health indicators, including new COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, individuals in intensive care, and ventilator use;
- Substantial increase in testing and contact tracing capacity;
- Sufficient resilience in New Jersey's health care system to include adequate bed capacity, ventilators, personal protective equipment, and workforce;
- Widespread safeguarding of workplaces;
- Widespread safeguarding and capacity of child care, schools, and mass transit;
- Continued public compliance."

Source: *State of NJ Website* <https://nj.gov/governor/news/news/562020/approved/20200601a.shtml>

Stage 1 in New Jersey began May 18; Stage 2 in New Jersey began June 15. We have included a description of New Jersey's stages in Appendix B.

These Journey Forward guidelines will remain in place until they are revised or amended based on updated scientific and public health information, recommendations from the Governor's Office, and direction from Bishop Hughes. If there is an outbreak in a local area, congregations may need to move out of their buildings, until the crisis has been controlled. Congregations are encouraged to be flexible, fluid and vigilant as we adjust and readjust to the health crisis.

SECTION 1: **READ THIS** – OPENING, CLOSING, AND RISK LEVELS

We have seen COVID risk levels rise throughout our diocese in late fall of 2020 and decline in late spring of 2021. Throughout these ups and downs, our priority continues to be to show our love for our neighbor, even if that means fasting at times from those ways of being in community that we treasure.

Determining COVID Risk Level

Three primary factors are used in these guidelines for determining risk level. Other data may be considered, but these three are considered a minimum for determining risk level in the Episcopal Diocese of Newark:

1. Rate of Infection
2. Number of Daily Cases (per 100,000 people)
3. Positive Daily Test Rate

These factors will be examined on a county level. Other geographic units were considered, since some counties in our diocese cover a large area or include a variety of sizes and types of communities. However, the most reliable reporting of these three factors seems to be by county. As a minimum standard, all congregations need to follow the risk level for their county. If you have data that the risk is **higher** in your municipality or local area than the county, then your risk level would be higher. If your local area is lower than the county, you would still abide by the county risk level.

Source for Data

The [COVID Act Now website](#) will continue to be our source for color-coded designation of COVID risk organized by county. Additionally, [the New Jersey Department of Health COVID website \(https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/ncov.shtml\)](https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/ncov.shtml) is recommended for specific COVID rules at the state of New Jersey level.

We recommend a review of any new CDC information; however, we recognize that the CDC is addressing nationwide concerns and may not always be applicable to New Jersey's particular situation. All directives from the Governor's office should be followed, though these guidelines may at times be more restrictive with respect to COVID.

As noted above, to keep us on the same track, the Task Force asks all congregations to follow the [CovidActNow website for New Jersey \(https://covidactnow.org/us/new_jersey-nj\)](https://covidactnow.org/us/new_jersey-nj). It has an easy to read color coding system for the "COVID Risk Level" for the state and county-by-county. It tracks multiple factors, including the three that we are focused on here (Not all counties report out data on the other factors).

Color/Status	Daily Cases per 100K people	Rate of Infection	Positive Test Rate
Dark Red/Severe outbreak/Extreme	75+	Over 2.5	Over 40%
Red/Active or imminent outbreak/Critical	25-75	1.4-2.5	20-40%
Orange/At risk of outbreak/High	10-25	1.1-1.4	10-20%
Yellow/Slow disease growth/Medium	1-10	0.9-1.1	3-10%
Green/On track to contain COVID/Low	Less than 1	0.9 or lower	Less than 3%

Whichever of these categories is the highest risk for your county is your risk level. You could have Daily Cases in Red, Rate of Infection in Orange, and Positive Test Rate as Green – your county would be Red. One area being at a higher level elevates the risk level for the county. It only takes one factor to elevate the risk level.

Planning with CovidActNow Risk Levels

1. **Three days (72 hours)** prior to a planned in-person gathering, congregation leaders will make a decision about whether it can proceed based on the COVID Risk Level on the CovidActNow website for their county. For example, the Risk Level reported on Thursday morning should determine a Sunday morning service the following Sunday. A decision can be made earlier, but no later than three days ahead of an event.
2. Parishioners can be encouraged to check the website to monitor their county’s status, so that there is early warning for counties that are nearing a raised status. Everyone should be given access to understanding the Risk Levels and watching together to plan ahead.

COVID Risk Level Actions Summary

If your county is . . .

1. **Dark Red or Red** (Extreme or Critical Risk) signals severe or active/imminent outbreak, in-person gatherings should be suspended. A live streaming/worship crew of 10 may gather, including the officiant, in the church building, if that is your practice, observing all other safety guidelines. The Bishop has the discretion to limit that further, as needed.
2. **Orange** (High Risk) signals that you are at risk of outbreak, the core Journey Forward gathering guidelines are in effect (found in the Orange section of this document).
3. **Yellow** (Medium Risk) signals slow disease growth. This level allows some guidelines to be relaxed and more openness than the core guidelines at Orange.

4. **Green** (Low Risk) signals that this is the time when restrictions on gatherings would be lifted, though that may require Green status for a period of time, may be connected to state reopening requirements, and may require consultation with the Bishop's Office. Procedures for moving into Green status will be published at a later date.

Additionally, it is always an option to delay gathering in-person and to continue to worship and meet remotely, even if your county is in Orange or Yellow Risk Level. Consider the following:

1. What are the options if the clergy person is someone who is particularly vulnerable to infection and, therefore, should refrain from leading in-person worship until it is safe to do so?
2. Consider how to clearly and lovingly tell those who are particularly vulnerable to infection that they should stay home and continue worshipping virtually until it is safer for them to return.
3. What are some safe ways to be creative and offer as many opportunities as needed for those who choose to re-gather to do so? For example, some congregations may offer more services with fewer people and/or creating a rotation within the congregation. Each congregation will need to assess its building capacity and have a plan for marking off seating.
4. Flexibility will be important. Consider that different regions are likely to have different Risk Levels, so congregations may be following different guidelines from place to place.
5. As vaccinations increase in 2021, consider who in your community population may not be vaccinated and how your congregation gatherings can be welcoming and safe for them (this includes, as of this writing, young children and those with a medical status that prevents vaccination).

The Bishop has full discretion to modify this rubric at any time.

SECTION 2: GATHERING GUIDELINES BY RISK LEVEL

Go to [Covid ActNow for New Jersey](https://covidactnow.org/state/NJ) and click on your county (<https://covidactnow.org/state/NJ>)

(The county's color is based on the **highest** risk for any single factor listed.

If only one factor is Red, the county is coded as Red.)



Dark Red or Red – Extreme or Critical Risk Level – Severe or Active/Imminent Outbreak

If your county is in Dark Red or Red – the following would be appropriate actions:

Worship

Out of concern for love of neighbor, general in-person worship should return to fasting at this level of risk.

Indoor Worship

The Officiant or Celebrant and only a minimal crew for worship leaders and live streaming/recording (10 total unless the Bishop directs otherwise; no congregation present) may be in the building to provide live streamed or recorded worship services. If Altar Guild or others need to set up or take down any worship materials, no more than three people may be in the space at one time and for a period of 45 minutes or less, before or after the service.

Outdoor services

These may also take place, but are subject to the same limitations as indoor worship (10 maximum for live streaming or recording, unless the Bishop directs otherwise) to discourage public gatherings in times of extreme and critical risk.

Holy Baptism

Baptism should be delayed at this Risk Level. When Emergency Baptism is appropriate, instructions for that can be found on pages 313-314 of the *Book of Common Prayer*, with some additional notes on the diocesan website.

Holy Eucharist

While Eucharist can be conducted with the priest and the live streaming crew present (providing at least one other person present), only the Celebrant will receive Communion at this Risk Level.

Weddings

Weddings should be delayed at this Risk Level. Contact the Bishop's Office if an urgent or unusual circumstance needs to be addressed.

Burials

Whenever possible, Burial and Memorial services should be postponed. The Church does not have a requirement as to timing for such services. The Book of Common Prayer on p. 490 instructs us that

“The service should be held at a time when the congregation has the opportunity to be present.” This can be an appropriate action for practical and pastoral reasons even in more normal times. Cremation is always acceptable, and it is possible to have a full service at a later date with the cremated remains present.

Any Burial rites at the church or graveside may only have the Officiant and the minimal (10 person maximum) live stream team present. Face coverings are to be worn and a minimum of 6 ft of physical distance is to be maintained at all times, including when traveling to and from the cemetery.

If a service is held in a funeral home, the same standards as at the church are in place, if the Officiant is there in-person (Officiant and minimal live stream team). The Officiant may conduct the service remotely if the family decides to gather at the funeral home under their direction.

Pastoral Care

At this level of risk, pastoral care should be by phone or online only. This includes Ministration at Time of Death.

Meetings or Classes

All meetings and classes should be conducted remotely at this Risk Level, via online or phone resources. Annual Meetings should be postponed until a lower Risk Level is achieved.

Social Events

All social gatherings within the parish, including Coffee Hour, should be by phone or online only.

Schools, Tenants, Non-Parish Groups

Schools, whether a ministry of the parish or a tenant, should follow the State of New Jersey requirements for being open, closed, or any limitations in their operation.

Tenants should be given a copy of these guidelines and be briefed on what the congregation’s plans are at this Risk Level. They should follow all state requirements and guidelines. Their use of the building is subject to the lease that is in effect and under the supervision of the Rector or Priest-in-charge (or Vestry, if that role is vacant).

Non-parish groups who are not tenants should likewise be given a copy of these guidelines and be briefed on the congregation’s plans. They should follow all state requirements and guidelines. Their use of the building subject to the determination of the Rector or Priest-in-charge (or Vestry , if that role is vacant).

Go to [Covid ActNow for New Jersey](https://covidactnow.org/state/NJ) and click on your county (<https://covidactnow.org/state/NJ>)
(The county's color is based on the **highest** risk for any single factor listed. If no factors are Red and one or more is Orange, only one factor is Red, the county is coded as Orange.)

Orange – High Risk Level – At Risk of Outbreak

If your county is in Orange – the following would be appropriate actions:

If your county is at Orange/High Risk Level, but you do not believe that your parish is able to implement these guidelines, it is perfectly fine and safer to remain at the Red level of restrictions (worship should not be held in-person indoors or outdoors, but through remote services online or by phone). Please contact the Bishop's Office for assistance and support as needed.

Initial Preparation

Journey Forward/Reopening Team

If your congregation has not yet formed a team for this purpose, from a prior reopening, it is highly encouraged for the clergy and Vestry to appoint a team to take responsibility for working through these steps and the significant preparation for reopening.

Congregational Discussion and Assessment

If in-person gatherings have ceased due to an increased Risk Level, it is important to plan conversations with congregation members to reassess readiness to gather in-person again, including revisiting the questions to congregants from Bishop Hughes regarding the pandemic:

- What have you missed most during the pandemic?
- What have you discovered of value to you in the pandemic?
- What will you want to bring with you into the future?
- What will you need to feel safe in returning to church?

An email survey may be used to address these questions, as well. To ensure that everyone knows what to expect, these conversations should take place prior to re-initiating in-person gatherings.

Communication

1. Once you have determined with the congregation that you intend to meet again in-person, please remind the congregation of the limitations regarding worship (singing, recitation, exchanging The Peace, Communion, etc.). Even now, many months into this pandemic, it is likely that the information will need to be repeated again and again so that as many people as possible have the opportunity to “read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest.”

2. It is important to remind the congregation that, while every effort will be made to keep people safe, there is no way to completely eliminate the risk of infection.
3. Consider having one or more parish meetings (by zoom or conference call) to discuss these guidelines before re-initiating gathering (or gathering for the first time). You may want to canvass the congregation to determine how many are likely to attend in person.
4. Communicate with any groups or individuals that are not part of the parish but use the building or grounds, such as those who rent space, share church protocols requiring compliance with disinfecting of space after usage. Non-parish groups or individuals are otherwise responsible themselves for determining how they are following state and public health guidelines.
5. Ensure that systems are in place to maintain ongoing communication and situational awareness with the congregation, communicating on a regular basis as guidance changes.

Buildings

In considering reopening the buildings for in-person gatherings, the following topics should be reviewed.

Space considerations

1. Assess the seating capacity of the congregation, ensuring the following:
 - a. Maintain a minimum of 6' distance between individuals and households;
 - b. Provide for more than 6' of distance between the **masked** worship leader/preacher and the next closest person (please see note in Appendix A, paragraph 2 below);
 - c. Provide for **separate** podiums or lecterns for any other **masked** speakers, such as lectors, again allowing for at least 6' of distance between them and other people;
 - d. Provide for 6' of distance between any masked cantor or vocalist and the next closest person. Singers should not sing unmasked.
 - e. Adhere to the state's restrictions on the current maximum number of people allowed for indoor and outdoor events – or – the Bishop's current guideline, whichever is lower. As of this writing, in mid-May, Bishop Hughes' limits at the High Risk/Orange level are 100 persons indoors or outdoors, maintaining 6 feet of distance. These limits may increase or decrease and current diocesan guidelines can be found on the main diocesan [COVID-19 web page \(https://dioceseofnewark.org/covid-19\)](https://dioceseofnewark.org/covid-19).
2. Determine (or re-establish) how “traffic flow” will be managed to ensure proper physical distancing. Using traffic flow guides in common areas with arrows indicating direction can be helpful, as can designating which doors are entrances and which are exits, to avoid crossing paths.

Air circulation plan

It has become increasingly clear how important ventilation is when using indoor spaces during this pandemic

1. Ensure that HVAC (Heating/Ventilation/Air Conditioning) systems are routinely checked, cleaned, and operate properly.

2. Increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows and doors. Use fans for exhaust purposes (blowing air toward the windows and doors). Ceiling fans are not sufficient for this purpose.
3. Churches with existing ducted HVAC systems should use them in the regular manner.
4. During church services, when using air conditioning, change fan setting from “auto” to “on” so that air flow is continual.
5. Consult with Jim Caputo, if you have questions on this topic.

Safe distance plan

1. Measure and mark pews and aisles for compliance with 6 feet social distancing mandates. For outdoor services, consider how to mark distances for households in the outdoor environment. Remember that the 6 feet should be considered in all directions.
2. Care should be taken to prevent proximity between attendees in church aisles.
3. Consider use of vinyl stickers as markers that will withstand disinfecting routines.
4. Set first seating position a minimum of 12 feet (twice the social distance norm) from lecterns, podiums and/or the pulpit. (See the note in Appendix A for more information on how distances were determined in this document.)
5. Preachers, lay readers, and other speakers should speak from different lecterns, podiums, pulpits and/or microphones. Each speaker should be 6 feet from other worshipers.
6. Masked vocalists or cantors should have a designated space and be at least 6 feet from others.

Cleaning

While the concern with surface contact and transmission has lessened over the months, it is still good safety and risk mitigation practice to ensure that commonly touched surfaces are cleaned and disinfected regularly.

1. If your space has not been in use in some time, you may wish to consider doing a deep cleaning of all common areas, as well as disinfecting any surfaces that are touched during the service, e.g. doorknobs, light switches, pews and kneelers. Gather needed supplies for this task and identify who will provide this, whether a cleaning service or volunteers from the congregation. Please see Appendix C for a list of sources for cleaning products and professional cleaning services and contact Jim Caputo for updated information.
2. Install hand sanitizer dispensers or have hand sanitizer available at every entrance. Hand sanitizer wipes may be made available.
3. Maintain a supply of disposable masks and sanitizing wipes at entrances.
4. Place closed receptacles at exits for disposal of wipes and masks and provide a recycling bin if single use paper service materials are being used.
5. Develop a schedule of increased, routine cleaning and disinfection; be sure to follow the instructions on your disinfectant. Here is a link to the CDC guidelines for cleaning and disinfecting, also noted in Appendix A: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>.
 - a. Take into account size of space, number of days/services being held and number of persons permissible within space to determine appropriate ways to disinfect.

- b. Consider scheduling multiple services in a single space further apart to allow time for a complete air exchange and any necessary cleaning and disinfecting of high-contact surfaces between services, following the instructions on your disinfectant.
- c. Designate who is to clean between services, and provide gloves and disinfectant for this purpose.

Signage

Ensure that signs have been posted in highly visible locations (entrances, restrooms, gathering spaces) that clearly define expectations for in-person gatherings, including:

- “Masks must be worn at all times by everyone over the age of 2”
- Encourage hand washing and use of hand sanitizer;
- Social distancing in pews and aisles (or outdoor seating areas);
- Collecting offerings;
- Service materials;
- Stay home if experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 or not feeling well
- Post COVID symptoms as a reminder of what to watch out for.

Please provide signs in all languages used in the congregation. Here is a link to sign templates, also noted in Appendix A: <https://dioceseofnewark.org/resource-general/sign-templates>. For outdoor services, signposts may need to be erected.

Reinforce the information on the signs through other communication, to ensure that everyone present understands the norms. This could be done by the worship leader or someone else at the beginning of the service, for example.

Entry and Exit protocols

1. Develop a plan for people entering the church that can include health checks and recording contact information. Consider using separate doors for entrance and exit. Consider how to adapt this for an outdoor space in terms of directing people to enter or exit.
2. Develop a plan for dismissing congregants in an orderly fashion that maintains social distancing.
3. Encourage congregants to leave directly after the service to limit the time gathered on church property.
4. If church facilities are shared with other programs such as daycare, school, or food programs, or other such regular ongoing activity, use signage to limit worshipers from encountering other program participants.
5. If planning an outdoor service or event, determine a safe way for entry and exit to the building during the event as needed (restroom use, for example) and communicate this plan clearly.

Restroom protocol

Determine if restrooms will be available for use or not. In addition:

1. Consider placing hand sanitizer near restrooms so that people can sanitize their hands without occupying the restroom.
2. If restroom usage is permitted, determine how restroom is to be thoroughly cleaned between services.
3. Only one person in a restroom at a time, except within the same household (e.g., a young child needing parental assistance).
4. Have sanitizing wipes available in the restroom. Request that users wipe every surface they have touched, including the door knob. Be sure to have a closed container for proper disposal of used sanitizing wipes just outside the restroom.
5. Post signage regarding washing hands, wiping surfaces.
6. Consider installing motion detecting light switches to avoid having to touch surfaces in order to turn on lights.

Water receptacles

Prohibit use of water fountains or water coolers or any shared vessels. Invite people to bring their own water in a reusable container.

Risk mitigation

1. Masks should be available at all entrances for those who come unmasked. Please see Appendix C for a list of sources that includes masks.
2. Consider how to handle situations in which the guidelines are not followed or how to deal with resistance to these norms.

Emergency and Outbreak Planning

Emergency planning

1. First aid kits should be available in multiple locations with supplies kept up to date. Consider inclusion of an infrared thermometer in the kit.
2. List of emergency numbers (Police, Fire, Ambulance, Health Department, Poison Control) should be posted in a prominent place and also be listed inside the first aid kit
3. In order to limit the number of people responding to an accident or illness, designate a person(s) to be the **Incident Responder** (formerly called Medical Responder) responsible if someone arrives at the church who is ill or suffers an injury. If possible, this person should have basic first aid and CPR training. This person does not need to be a medically trained person. This role is simply to prevent more than one person from interacting with someone who may be ill.

Protocol for assisting a person who is ill – Incident Responder

Decide whether or not the temperatures of everyone who comes into the building will be taken. This can be done safely if both parties are masked and an infrared or thermoscan thermometer is used.

1. Conduct a primary assessment. Disallow entry and immediately provide a mask to any person exhibiting the following COVID-19 symptoms.

Fever (T above 100.4 degrees F)	Muscle or body aches
Chills	Headache
Cough	New loss of taste or smell
Shortness of breath	Sore throat
Difficulty breathing	Congestion or runny nose
Fatigue	Nausea or vomiting
	Diarrhea
2. Determine if they need immediate assistance (911) or can seek medical assistance of their own volition. Assist the ill person in exiting and leaving the property.
3. Notify the rector and wardens of incident for follow up and contact tracing purposes.
4. The designated Incident Responder must know the risks in taking on this role and likely will need to self-quarantine until a positive or negative COVID-19 determination has been made.

Outbreak Planning

Review (or develop) the emergency plan for possible outbreak within the congregation. Church leaders should know what to do if someone is infected and attended a public gathering at the church. Considerations likely would include:

1. The congregation may need to suspend in-person gatherings for 10 days to ensure that infection does not spread (returning to Red Risk Level restrictions, above).
2. Communication strategies should be discussed ahead of time.
3. Appropriate pastoral care for the infected person and their family should be undertaken.

Worship Support

Leaflets and other printed materials

1. Any printed materials should be located to allow participants to pick them up directly (rather than being handed out by an usher or greeter, to limit close interaction).
2. Print materials, whether leaflets or BCPs or hymnals, should not be shared by individuals in different households.

Sound system

Ensure that your sound system is in good working condition. If you are using it in conjunction with zoom events or live streaming, be sure to test system functionality ahead of an event. In addition:

1. Disinfect or change microphone covers between use.
2. Consider use of disposable microphone covers.
3. **Do not share** microphones between speakers at the same event, if at all possible.

Remote Worship: Live streaming, Recording, Phone

Even when gathering in-person, remote worship options (whether live streamed, recorded, or by phone) should still be offered to those who cannot be present. **Bishop Hughes has indicated her expectation that remote or online worship options continue to be offered.** Determine the

needs and practice of your parish for how they participate in the service online or remotely. Consider what equipment and applications are needed to welcome and engage all remote participants in worship.

2. Positioning of the phone/camera should comply with social distancing and allow for maximum visibility for congregants in attendance and online.
3. Consider a video camera and laptop with HDMI ports to enable unobtrusive filming of service(s).
4. Test for sound, lighting, and Wi-Fi prior to service.
5. Live streaming Teams
 - a. At Orange Risk Level/High Risk, live streaming teams can include as many as 10 persons in the building, though should still be kept to as few as possible within that number.
 - b. All Journey Forward Gathering Guidelines, including those regarding face coverings, distancing, and sanitizing, should be followed by those gathered to produce a live streamed or recorded service.
 - c. Live streamed and recorded services should consider modeling Journey Forward Guidelines as much as possible, especially if in-person worship is also taking place or anticipated.

Reservations and Attendance

1. If you have not already done so, a system of registering participants should be created, to ensure that attendance is below the stated maximum. This can be done through an online form, a phone message system, email or any other reliable process.
2. Likewise, actual attendance for those in person needs to be documented. Consider ways to do so that does not increase the risk of contamination (i.e. avoid a shared table, pen, paper, etc.).
3. Contact information will be needed for all persons in attendance so that they can be reached later in the event of possible exposure. It is important to get this information from every person every time.

In-Person Worship

Assessing Risk

Before a clergy person considers leading in-person worship and before a congregation member considers attending or serving at in-person worship, all should carefully consider potential exposure that they may have had during the two weeks prior to that worship service. Any greater risk of exposure could be carried into the congregation, putting all at risk.

Also, prior to participating in an in-person worship service, consider carefully that this is an event that increases a participant's risk of exposure and that the virus may be carried from the service to any other contacts for up to two weeks after the service.

Simply put, everyone you encounter for two weeks prior to worship may increase the risk of infecting the congregation. Everyone you encounter for two weeks after worship may be put at risk by your participation in the service. These are not simple questions and should be very deliberately considered.

Length of service

No matter which liturgy is being conducted, service length should be minimized to limit potential exposure time to the virus. In-person services should not be longer than **45 minutes**. Possible adaptations to assist with that could be:

1. Shortening the Sermon, the Prayers of the People, or the time involved at The Peace.
2. Reducing number or length of musical selections.
3. At the Eucharist (or Ante-Communion), shortening the Gloria to a shorter song of praise; omitting the Collect of Purity; omitting the Confession of Sin; and omitting the Agnus Dei.

Welcoming Visitors

1. When planning for your maximum capacity, consider leaving some seating available for visitors.
2. Rather than turn newcomers away, consider asking for parishioner volunteers in advance of a service who would be willing to leave the service if newcomers arrive.
3. Ushers should provide complimentary masks and information regarding your parish's safety guidelines to visitors.

Liturgical Ministries

During your liturgies, consider:

1. Minimizing number of ministers needed, e.g., one member of Altar Guild (come in earlier or stagger duties), one lector, one Eucharistic minister, etc.
2. Masking: All participants, including the celebrant, preacher, acolytes, ushers, Eucharistic ministers, lectors, and congregation members must wear cloth masks for indoor services and must do so outdoors when it is not possible to maintain 6 feet of distance or more (NJ Executive Order 163, p. 4, #1; p. 5, #3, <https://nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/pdf/EO-163.pdf>).
3. Social distancing of a minimum of 6 feet between ministers during the service: procession, seating, general interactions, spacing from congregants, healing ministers. Refrain from sharing or passing books or service materials. Consider how to space acolytes 6 feet apart in procession (e.g., Are a cross and two candle bearers feasible?)
4. Preaching and Reading: The distance between a masked lector, preacher, celebrant/officiant should be greater than the 6 feet minimum. Consider 12 feet as the minimum distance between the masked speaker and listeners, whenever possible.
5. Avoid sharing of lecterns, podiums, microphones, lectionaries or Bibles.
6. There should be no physical contact during the liturgy, except within the same household.

Liturgical Music

1. Musicians should be socially distanced at a minimum of 6 feet, which may preclude the use of instrumental ensembles.

2. Instrumental music is encouraged, including organ, piano and other instruments. Consider wind and brass instruments with care at this time. If they are in use, they should be at a distance of **6 or more feet**. Appropriate covers for instruments to help reduce aerosol spread should be used when possible.
3. All shared instruments should be thoroughly cleaned between uses.
(See NAMM guidelines, <https://www.namm.org/covid-19/articles/covid-19-and-instrument-cleaning>.)
4. Cantors or single vocalists may sing masked at in-person gatherings, indoors or outdoors, providing there is a distance of **6 feet** between the singer and the congregation and no one else is using that same location in the space during the service. **Only one vocalist at a time should be singing at this risk level**. Consider limiting the number of times in the service that vocal singing is used, to reduce potential exposure.
5. There should be no congregational singing at this risk level.
6. Choirs should not sing at this risk level.

Note: Experts have warned that the fine aerosols produced in diaphragmatic breathing carry further and hang in the air longer than those produced in ordinary speech or coughs. A few articles reporting on studies related to this are found in Appendix A.

Because we are emphasizing caution in our expression of love for our neighbors, we will continue to refrain from congregational and choral singing at this Risk Level and higher.

Pledges and Plate Offerings

1. Encourage online offerings and pledge payments or sending them by mail. It is suggested that this be communicated at each service.
2. Provide a basket or closed box with slot, or alms basin for the collection of offerings at the entrance or other suitable fixed location. Avoid passing collection plates.
3. Ensure that the offering box is cleaned after each use.

Rites: Holy Baptism

At this time, it is encouraged that Baptisms be postponed, when possible. When Holy Baptism is part of in-person worship, the guidelines below should be followed. When Emergency Baptism is appropriate, instructions for that can be found on pages 313-314 of the *Book of Common Prayer*, with some additional notes on the diocesan website.

Holy Baptism guidelines – indoor or outdoor services

1. All current in-person guidelines are in effect for these services, including submitting a planning form in advance to the Bishop's Office prior to the first Baptism service conducted under these guidelines. Please identify the font or basin layout in the diagram of the worship space.

2. If Holy Baptism is taking place at an outdoor service, a temporary basin or vessel should be set up for the outdoor baptism, unless using a natural water feature.
3. When Holy Baptism is in use as part of in-person worship, the number of those present should be limited to **100 or fewer persons**, unless the Bishop determines and publishes a different limit at any given time. It is appropriate and encouraged that the baptism be live streamed or otherwise video recorded and shared with the congregation.
4. The Candidate for Baptism (or the parents, if a child) should be instructed clearly **prior to the service** that the officiant will be closer than 6 feet during the pouring of the water and that the Celebrant will necessarily touch the forehead of the Candidate at the signing of the cross (with Chrism, if that is parish practice). The Candidate (or the parents) should assent to these exceptions to the health and safety protocols prior to the service and provide that assent expressly **in an email or in writing**.
5. If conducting multiple baptisms in one service, please recognize that this creates a greater risk. In that case, new water for each baptism is suggested, unless the Candidates are from the same household.
6. The Celebrant should remain masked throughout the baptism and should wash hands for 20 seconds with soap and water and/or use hand sanitizer directly before the baptism (water) portion of the rite and after the completion of the baptism itself.
7. When baptizing a child, a member of the child's household, such as a parent or other family member, should hold the baptismal candidate over the font or basin being used for baptism. **Only these three individuals should be at the font or basin: Celebrant, Candidate, and one other household member of the Candidate, if they need someone to hold them; all others should be at least 6 feet distance from the baptism.** This instruction is to comply with New Jersey Governor's Executive Orders, that requires distancing between individuals if not in the same household. An exception is made for religious purposes, but that only relates to the necessary 2-3 people mentioned here.
8. Be sure to set aside enough space around the font or basin to reduce crowding and enable 6 feet or more of distance between participants from different households.

Note: The Bishop may revise or rescind these guidelines with short notice. It is important that participants be made aware of this possibility. Scheduling a baptism does not guarantee that it will be possible to actually have the baptism on that date, especially if the governor's office changes state requirements or if the priest decides in consultation with the rest of the Vestry that keeping a scheduled date is not sufficiently safe.

Rites: Holy Eucharist

Given the additional risk involved in administering the Holy Eucharist, the congregation and clergy person should consider very carefully when and whether to resume this rite and, if resuming, how frequently to offer this service.

Given the additional risk presented by gathering for Holy Eucharist, each congregation needs to determine the best way forward to understand and manage that risk. If the risk seems too great, then continuing to worship at home is the best option. Alternatively, practices to reduce risk could be put in place. For example, if limiting the numbers of participants is important, the congregation could

rotate who attends Holy Eucharist (this could be simply accomplished by assigning Sundays to attend Eucharist based on last name or some other clear system). Or, to reduce frequency of exposure to one another, Holy Eucharist could be scheduled on a monthly or other basis. These are simply examples to consider. Once it is decided to schedule a service of Holy Eucharist, it is important to ensure that the congregation is well-informed that they are taking a greater risk by participating.

If Holy Eucharist is being offered, these guidelines are provided to decrease the risk in doing so. No congregation or priest is required to resume the Holy Eucharist, if the risk for them is considered too great.

If planning to resume Holy Eucharist, consider using in-person Morning Prayer or Ante-Communion (The Liturgy of the Word) for the first few Sundays prior, as members of the parish get used to or reacquainted with the safety restrictions that are in place before moving to Holy Eucharist. When you do resume Communion, consider the following:

1. When the Holy Eucharist begins to be offered in a parish, it is important to limit the number of ministers serving Communion to as few people as possible. The Celebrant should prepare the elements prior to the service so as to limit the number of people touching the wafers.
2. Refrain from reading the Gospel in the midst of the people, since it puts a reader projecting near the congregants.
3. There should be no physical contact when passing The Peace, except within the same household.
4. All Eucharistic ministers, both lay and ordained, should be fully masked throughout the entire service, including during the distribution of Communion.
5. All ministers, lay or ordained, should wash hands thoroughly for 20-seconds with soap and warm water prior to the celebration of the Eucharist. If hand washing facilities are not readily available, hand sanitizer must be used by all ministers prior to the celebration of the Eucharist.
6. Preparation of the Elements:
 - a. Eucharistic elements should be placed on the credence table prior to the service and should not be brought forward during the Offertory.
 - b. Only metal Eucharistic vessels should be used at this time. Avoid chalices and patens made of clay, wood, plastic, or glass.
 - c. The Deacon, or Priest if there is no Deacon, should prepare the altar with only enough wafers to commune the congregation present. Communion from Reserved Sacrament should not be generally administered in a public service, since it is less clear who has handled the consecrated elements in reserve. Diocesan Communion Under Special Circumstances is an exception to that, though those wafers should be consecrated on the same day as distribution, as much as possible.
 - d. Only individual wafers should be used; do not use any types of bread or wafers that may need to be physically torn/broken by the Celebrant before distribution, excepting the host that the Celebrant will consume.

- e. The large host (“priest’s host”) should be placed on a paten by itself with all other wafers placed in a ciborium or on a separate paten.
 - f. The wafers that will be distributed to the congregation should be covered with a pall or ciborium cover during the Eucharistic prayer.
 - g. The Celebrant (or Deacon) should prepare a small amount of wine to be consecrated, sufficient for the Celebrant to receive.
7. When the Eucharist is celebrated, the Celebrant should be the only person at the altar. Any other clergy or assisting lay ministers should not stand at the altar but at another place, appropriately distanced (6 feet or more).
8. While saying the Eucharistic Prayer, the Celebrant should only touch the vessels containing the individual wafers and wine. To satisfy the rubric, only the large host (“priest’s host”) should be actually touched by the Celebrant during the prayer.
9. It is recommended that the Celebrant keep manual acts to a minimum. Consider limiting other movements while at the altar. For instance, avoid bowing low over the elements while saying the Words of Institution so as not to bring one’s mouth (and breath) close to the elements.
10. The Celebrant should remove their mask only to receive Communion after the Invitation and should clean hands and put mask back on before distributing Communion.
11. Only the Celebrant should partake of the wine by the chalice during this Risk Level or higher. The congregation present is asked to receive Communion in one kind only at this time. This is an extraordinary step, only considered in the interest of public health.
12. Administration of Communion:
 - a. Communicants should receive at standing stations individually or by the Celebrant/Eucharistic Minister moving through the congregation; kneeling at the altar rail must be avoided at this time to avoid surface contact as well as the possibility of gathering too close to one another.
 - b. Communion Stations
 - Those parishioners desiring Communion should maintain social distancing of 6 feet minimum while coming forward to receive. Ushers should regulate this process.
 - Communicants should line up in a single-file line while observing proper social distancing. Members of the same household need not observe social distancing with each other. (Alternatively, Communicants may stay in place and the Celebrant may move among them to administer the Bread.)
 - c. Nave Distribution
 - The Celebrant or Eucharistic Minister may move through the congregation, administering communion to each household at their seating location, if the space allows for that
 - In this model, communicants remain in place and wait for the Celebrant or Eucharistic Minister to come to them.
 - d. When close enough to the Celebrant/Eucharistic Minister, the Communicant, still masked, extends their hands to receive. The Celebrant should drop the host into their hand and avoid any contact with their hand. If the Celebrant comes in contact

- with a parishioner's hand, they should sanitize their hands before serving anyone else.
- e. Avoid administering Communion on the tongue at this time.
 - f. When the Communicant is a safe distance from the Celebrant and other Communicants (6 feet or more) or has returned to their pew, they may consume the host.
 - g. If a Communicant desires to receive a blessing only, they should signal that to the Celebrant (crossing their arms or whatever local practice might be) and the Celebrant should bless the Communicant without touching them.
13. Once all participants desiring to receive have been communicated, the consecrated elements should not generally be reserved but either consumed by the Celebrant or reverently disposed of after the service by a member of the Altar Guild.
 14. The Sacrament may nonetheless be reserved for the usual practices of the congregation, such as taking Communion to those who are ill (though that would be very rare at this Risk Level), but public distribution of Communion at an in-person service should not typically come from the reserved sacrament. See below concerning Diocesan Communion under Special Circumstances.
 15. The Celebrant (and any other Eucharistic ministers) should again wash or disinfect hands after distributing Communion.
 16. The Celebrant alone shall return to the altar for the Postcommunion Prayer, Blessing, and Dismissal. If a Deacon is present in the parish, they should offer the Dismissal from a place apart from the Celebrant.
 17. After the Altar Party has processed out of the Church, the Ushers should release rows of pews, **one at a time** to maintain social distancing and to assure that exits do not become overcrowded.
 18. Clergy should refrain from waiting to greet the congregation at the exit of the worship space, since that will become a natural gathering point. At all times, clergy should maintain social distancing when interacting with people. Avoid handshakes, hugs, kisses, and elbow bumps at this time.

From time to time, the Bishop may authorize Diocesan Communion under Special Circumstances, permitting distribution of consecrated Bread after the service at designated locations and by contact-free home delivery, as may be arranged with parishioners who cannot attend services in-person. As of this writing, May 2021, Bishop Hughes intends congregations to provide this ministry on a monthly basis, on a Sunday of their choosing. Please see the separate guidelines for this Eucharistic Ministry.

Rites: Marriage Services, indoors and outdoors

Weddings are permitted at the discretion of the parish clergy and at the comfort level of the couple. Weddings need to conform to social distancing guidelines set by the State of New Jersey and should observe all guidelines above on Liturgical Ministries and Liturgical Music. Additionally:

1. Limit in-person attendance to maximums set by the State of New Jersey, unless the Bishop determines and publishes a different limit at any given time, and, as much as a parish is able,

offer to livestream weddings to other parts of the building or for online participation for additional attendees.

2. All participants, including the Celebrant and any other assisting ministers, should remain masked throughout the entire service, with one exception for the couple.
3. The couple, being considered one household, may remove their masks briefly to greet one another at The Peace (“the kiss”), with everyone else maintaining 6 feet of distance.
4. Clear markers should be in place to designate distance for each individual household group present.
5. For the Blessing of the Rings or other symbols of the vows, the Celebrant should refrain from physically touching the rings and instead pronounce God’s blessing over the rings. The couple should be in possession of the rings prior to exchanging them, rather than handing them back and forth to the priest or an attendant
6. For the Pronouncement of the Marriage, Clergy should take care not to touch the hands of the couple at the “joining of the hands” (including refraining from the practice of wrapping a stole around their hands), but do so at a distance with an instruction to join hands instead. A hand may be extended towards the couple, if desired, at the Pronouncement.
7. For the Blessing of the Marriage, the Celebrant should refrain from physically touching the couple, but some other sign of blessing may be used, such as the sign of the cross, or one or both hands extended towards the couple.
8. Since Holy Communion is not a required portion of the rite, it is strongly encouraged not to include Communion at this Risk Level or higher.
9. The New Jersey marriage certificate and the parish register require signatures from the couple, the witnesses, and the officiant. This should be accomplished with no in-person proximity or shared writing instrument. NJ Executive Order 135, p. 7 (2.b.iii-iv) describes a way to do this(<https://nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/pdf/EO-135.pdf>).
10. Attendees should refrain from throwing any objects or blowing bubbles on the couple as they leave the church.
11. Any surfaces touched during the service should be sanitized following the ceremony.

Rites: Burial Services, indoors and outdoors

Burial liturgies need to conform to social distancing guidelines set by the State of New Jersey and should observe all guidelines above on Liturgical Ministries and Liturgical Music. Additionally:

1. Limit in-person attendance to maximums set by the State of New Jersey, unless the Bishop determines and publishes a different limit at any given time, and, as much as a parish is able, offer to livestream funeral services to other parts of the building or for online participation for additional attendees.
2. All participants, including the Celebrant and any other assisting ministers, should remain masked throughout the entire service.
3. Since Holy Communion is not a required portion of the rite, it is strongly encouraged not to include Communion at this Risk Level or higher.
4. The Celebrant and any other assisting ministers should be the only members of the church who gather with the family for interment.

5. If there is a shovel, trowel, or any other physical object used for the casting of dirt upon the coffin or ashes, only the Celebrant should handle this instrument and perform this task.
6. Any surfaces touched during the service should be sanitized following the ceremony.
7. Clear markers should be in place to designate distance for each individual household group.
8. The impulse to offer consolation and support for those grieving must be accomplished without contact and from a distance. Attendees should avoid hugging or handshakes at the conclusion of the service.

In-Person Worship – General Notes

All considerations above, all previous sections of the document, including Liturgical Ministries and Liturgical Music, apply to all in-person services. Additionally:

1. While state guidelines regarding the size of indoor gatherings may vary, diocesan guidelines about worship and other indoor gatherings should be followed by all parishes in the diocese. This may mean indoor worship and gatherings will be smaller and follow a different timeline than state guidelines might allow.
1. Attendance numbers may be controlled by advance reservation/registration as noted above in the section on “Worship Support.” Those arriving after the maximum number of attendees has been reached will not be seated at that service, unless another participant leaves. Ushers will be prepared to invite anyone standing on the periphery and above the maximum to please return to their car and plan to return for another service or join in online worship.
2. A complete record of all in attendance, including names and contact information (email and phone) should be maintained so as to allow contact tracing later, as needed. This record-keeping needs to take place without sharing pen, paper, clipboard, etc. It may be done electronically or at a distance. This record should be in the possession of (or accessible online by) more than one leader in the congregation.
3. Hand sanitizer and masks/face coverings should be supplied by the church as needed for all in attendance. All present are required by the State of New Jersey to wear face coverings at an indoor service and at any outdoor service where social distancing is not possible, as noted in NJ Governor’s Executive Order 163 (<https://nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/pdf/EO-163.pdf>). The Bishop asks all to wear face coverings, indoors or outdoors, regardless of distancing.
4. Extra ushers and attendants (who count towards the maximum number in attendance) may need to be stationed so as to ensure safe practices for entrance, parking and social distancing are followed, especially for outdoor services. All ushers should be aware of any potential hazards (uneven ground or paving stones, etc.) and be prepared to verbally warn parishioners who are not used to walking the grounds.
5. Attention must be paid to entrance and exit placements to avoid inadvertent infringements on social distancing. If dismissing the congregation by rows is necessary to maintain order and social distancing, ushers must be trained and empowered to be clear.
6. **Food or drink should not be served by the church at this time.**
7. After each gathering, all high contact surfaces that have been touched should be sanitized, including door handles, light switches, chairs, sound system elements, and other furnishings.

Classes, Meetings, Social Events

Outdoor Gatherings

Before outdoor gatherings of any kind may resume, the parish must engage in the discernment and preparation processes outlined above at the beginning of the Orange Risk Level section of this document. If this includes outdoor worship gatherings, a plan for outdoor in-person worship must be submitted to the Bishop's Office.

Other outdoor parish events – such as picnics, grounds clean-ups, etc. – should follow State of New Jersey and diocesan guidelines for outdoor gatherings.

Indoor gatherings

Before indoor gatherings of any kind may resume, the parish must engage in the discernment and preparation processes outlined above at the beginning of the Orange Risk Level section of this document. If this includes indoor worship gatherings, a plan for resuming in-person worship must be submitted to the Bishop's Office.

All indoor meetings and events by parishioners or others meeting in parish space must adhere to diocesan guidelines here and may not violate state guidelines regarding the wearing of masks and social distancing, maximum capacity, and logging for contact tracing all noted below. When planning a class, meeting or event, ensure that the room planned for a meeting can accommodate the number gathered including the 6 feet social distancing between each person.

All use of the building and grounds for parish activities, including, but not limited to, daycare and early childhood programs, AA and other 12-step meetings, food pantries, and thrift stores, must abide by the relevant guidelines and regulations from the State of New Jersey and follow the diocesan guidelines. See below regarding non-parish groups and activities, including tenants.

Parish staff

Parish staff should continue to have the ability to work from home, whenever possible during this Risk Level. Accommodation should be provided as much as possible to allow flexibility in working from home.

Cleaning procedures

1. Ensure proper cleaning procedures are in place after each use of your space.
2. Multiple meetings must be spaced at least an hour apart, with surfaces cleaned between use.
3. See “Buildings: Cleaning” above for detailed information.

Logging

Each congregation should maintain a log of everyone who uses any building or portion of the property (name, phone, email) to make contact tracing possible in the event of a coronavirus case. Inform non-parish users of the building or grounds of their responsibility to monitor attendance to facilitate contact tracing.

Online alternatives

We advise offering an online alternative to attendance for all parish activities, for persons who are in high risk categories or who live in households with high risk members.

Sunday School

In-person Sunday School for youth and children will be permitted to meet when in-person instruction in public schools is available. When the schools suspend in-person classes, in-person Sunday School should likewise be suspended.

Adult Education may gather following State of New Jersey requirements and diocesan guidelines for health and safety, as noted above for indoor gatherings.

Childcare (nursery) during worship services

Childcare/nursery care is not available during this Risk Level or higher. Children are welcome to attend services along with parents as part of their counted household group. Congregations are encouraged to assist households with children to feel welcome to do so.

Coffee Hour

Coffee Hour in-person, indoors, is not available at this Risk Level or higher. Other outdoor fellowship and events that ensure compliance with social distancing and masks (such as gathering in the parking lot by car, maintaining distance)

Food or drink should not be served by the church at this time.

Pastoral care

Pastoral care within parish buildings is considered a meeting and follows all the guidelines for meetings. Pastoral care outside parish buildings follows the guidelines of the facility being visited. Great care should be taken when planning any sort of pastoral visit, to reduce the possibility of transmission of the virus either to the caregiver or the care receiver.

Non-parish Activities and Tenants

All tenants or other non-parish groups or individuals using church property, whether indoors or outdoors, including other congregations worshipping on Episcopal Church property and AA and other 12-step groups, should be made aware of these guidelines. They are required to follow state requirements for any activities that they organize on church property, including social distancing and mask requirements. Clergy in charge of congregations or Vestries of other congregations should emphasize to tenants that they are responsible for sanitizing any spaces they use after their event.

Be aware that for certain activities (such as childcare providers), space requirements from the state may create restrictions that could impact parish events. Be sure to have that conversation about shared space with anyone using your building to avoid conflicts.

Go to [Covid ActNow for New Jersey](https://covidactnow.org/state/NJ) and click on your county (<https://covidactnow.org/state/NJ>)
(The county's color is based on the **highest** risk for any single factor listed.
If no factors are Red or Orange and one or more factors are Yellow, the county is coded as Yellow.)

Yellow – Medium Risk Level

Yellow – Medium Risk Level – Slow Disease Growth

At this level of risk, the guidelines above for High Risk (Orange) are still in effect, with the following changes and exceptions:

Attendance Limits

At this risk level, Bishop Hughes has determined that attendance limits for in-person gatherings, including worship, are as follows:

Indoor gatherings – maximum limit is 50% capacity of the space, as long as a 6 foot distance can be maintained between individuals from different households.

Outdoor gatherings – maximum limit is 500 persons, as long as a 6 foot distance can be maintained between individuals from different households.

Bishop Hughes may update these attendance limits as needed.

Vaccination status

While everyone is invited to carefully consider COVID-19 vaccination, in consultation with their doctor, **vaccine status should not be used as criteria for participation in worship or congregational ministry.** Please note that recent CDC guidance indicating relaxation of using masks and distancing rules are for fully vaccinated gatherings. Church gatherings are likely to always be mixed gatherings, with the possibility of unvaccinated participants present.

Masks

As of this writing, the state of New Jersey continues to require face coverings and masks indoors at public gatherings. The Diocese of Newark will follow these state requirements at our in-person worship gatherings. Additionally, singing requires masks or face coverings, indoors or outdoors. At meetings and small group gatherings, those present can determine together if masks are needed.

Music and Singing

At this risk level, music guidelines are as follows:

All singing at in-person events should use a face covering or mask.

Choirs may sing at in-person worship if they remain masked and a minimum of 6 feet from each other and other attendees. The number of choral singers may be determined according to the space maximums above.

Music ministers are encouraged to look at the use of space creatively to position choir members. They may wish to consult with their colleagues in other congregations for additional ideas.

Choir rehearsals held indoors (masked, distanced) are limited by the 50% capacity guideline and should be no longer than 30 minutes in one space. A full exchange of air should take place before resuming rehearsal in the same room. Outdoor rehearsals may be held following outdoor attendance limits and may be longer than 30 minutes, still using masks and observing distance.

Congregational singing at in-person worship **indoors** is possible, wearing masks and maintaining 6' distance between households, but is limited to either one hymn (near the end of the service is preferred, to minimize possible exposure) or up to 10 minutes total for congregational singing (including service music or chanted responses).

Congregational singing at **outdoor** in-person worship likewise should be masked and maintaining 6' distance between households. Outdoor congregational singing is not limited in length during the service.

Instruments may continue to be used, maintaining distance and adopting any other safety options that the music minister determines, including covers for brass instrument bells, as needed.

Coffee Hour

Coffee hour may be held in-person **outdoors** at this risk level. Food should not be shared between households and care should be taken with anything served to prevent coming in close proximity between households. Gatherings for meals, including potlucks, should be deferred. Food and drink should not be consumed at indoor gatherings at present.

As a reminder, the basic most important practices are:

- Keep wearing masks, especially when indoors or if singing
- Maintain 6' social distancing
- Keep gatherings short (worship services at 45 minutes, whenever possible)
- Outdoor events are safer than indoor events
- Keep washing your hands

If your county is at Yellow/Medium Risk Level, but you do not believe that your parish is able to implement these guidelines, it is perfectly fine and safer to remain at a higher level of restrictions (worship not held in-person indoors or outdoors, but through remote services online or by phone). Please contact the Bishop's Office for assistance and support as needed.

(The county's color is based on the **highest** risk for any single factor listed. If all factors are Green, the county is coded as Green. If any factors are a higher level, that is the county Risk Level)

Green – Low Risk Level

Green – Low Risk Level – On Track to Contain COVID

At this level of risk, the guidelines above for Medium and High Risk may be removed, at the Bishop's direction. There is likely to be a process of verification, to ensure that the risk is indeed low and stable. Additional information will be provided at a later date.

Appendix A: Links to resources

This is a subset of resources that the Journey Forward Task Force used to develop these guidelines.

The Task Force also had direct conversations with a local infectious disease doctor based in the Hackensack Meridian Health Care System at the Raritan Bay Medical Center, an epidemiologist from the Diocese of New Jersey, and an expert on HVAC systems at William Paterson University and instructor for Passaic County Fire Academy.

The distances recommended in this document (from each other, from the clergy person, from cantors, from singers) represent our best effort to find a reasonable path forward, given medical standards which churches cannot meet, the lack of comprehensive scientific information which is still being collected, and the political forces in our country today. Current CDC guidelines recommend a 6ft distance and masks between people breathing and speaking normally.

In addition, the Diocese of Newark is offering the services of our Parish Consultants Team to companion with you and your parish during this next phase of our Journey Forward. Please contact Canon Margo Peckham Clark, Canon for Congregational Life at mapclark@dioceseofnewark.org for more information.

State of New Jersey Resources

State of New Jersey guidelines

Department of Health

<https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/ncov.shtml>

New Jersey COVID-19 Hub

<https://covid19.nj.gov/>

Road Back: Restoring Economic Health through Public Health

<https://nj.gov/governor/news/news/562020/approved/20200427b.shtml>

Stage 2 Announcement by Governor Murphy

<https://nj.gov/governor/news/news/562020/approved/20200601a.shtml>

CDC Guidelines used in this document

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/index.html>

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/faith-based.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fphp%2Ffaith-based.html

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/participate-in-activities.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>

Ventilation and HVAC cleaning

Here's a link about ventilation from the CDC

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/ventilation.html?fbclid=IwAR2tHsMcL7T8YXuw37fLdi6Dfe_18YUiDc8CwrDJWakfHzGBL7Kk85DkP-VY

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/building-water-system.html>

The Task Force also consulted with expert William J. Siegrist, Associate Director and Plant Engineer, William Paterson University and Hazmat/Confined Space/Technical Rescue Instructor for Passaic County Fire Academy.

Sign templates from the Diocese of Newark

<https://dioceseofnewark.org/resource-general/sign-templates>

Science News Article on distances

<https://www.sciencenews.org/article/coronavirus-covid-19-why-6-feet-may-not-be-enough-social-distance>

On music and singing in worship

“Join Your Voices” campaign to resume singing

<https://noteablemask.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/JoinYourVoices.pdf>

A Facebook group “Dialogues on a Safe Return to Choral Singing:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/260857678364436>

National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) guidelines

<https://www.namm.org/covid-19/articles/covid-19-and-instrument-cleaning%20>

Elliott, Peter. “On Not Singing the Lord’s Song.” *Anglican Journal*.

<https://www.anglicanjournal.com/on-not-singing-the-lords-song/>

Bahl, Prateek, Charitha de Silva, Shovon Bhattacharjee, Haley Stone, Con Doolan, Abrar Ahmad Chughtai, C Raina MacIntyre. "Droplets and Aerosols Generated by Singing and the Risk of Coronavirus Disease 2019 for Choirs." *Clinical Infectious Diseases*, 27 August 2020.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/cid/ciaa1241>.

Lund University. "Could singing spread COVID-19?" *ScienceDaily*, 8 September 2020.
<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2020/09/200908101621.htm>.

Appendix B: Description of State of New Jersey Stages for Restart

[More information can be found here.](#)

Multi-Stage Approach to Execute a Responsible and Strategic Economic Restart

Maximum Restrictions

- Under maximum restrictions, New Jerseyans stayed at home as much possible and activity was limited to essential tasks.
- Permitted activities and businesses included emergency health care, essential construction, essential manufacturing, essential retail, including grocery stores and pharmacies.

Stage One

- In Stage One, restrictions are relaxed on low-risk activities, if appropriately safeguarded.
- All workers who can work from home continue to work from home even if their industry is reopening.
- Permitted activities and businesses expand to include
 - State Parks and Forests reopen for passive recreation, Golf courses reopen, Charter fishing and watercraft rental businesses reopen, Non-essential construction resumes, Non-essential retail reopens for curbside pickup, In-person sales at car and motorcycle dealerships and at bicycle shops resumes, Public and private beaches, boardwalks, lakes, and lakeshores reopen, Campgrounds reopen.
 - Some outdoor recreational businesses, including batting cages and golf ranges, shooting and archery ranges, horseback riding, private tennis clubs, and community gardens, restart their operations.
 - The limit on outdoor gatherings, including the capacity limit for some outdoor recreational businesses, increases from 10 to 25 individuals.
 - Professional sports teams can practice and engage in games or matches, if their leagues resume competition.
 - Elective surgeries and invasive procedures, both medical and dental, resume.
 - Horse racetracks reopen, with no spectators allowed.
 - Outdoor recreational and entertainment businesses reopen, with the exception of amusement parks, water parks, and arcades.

Stage Two: (New Jersey is currently in Stage Two as of November 30, 2020)

- Restrictions are relaxed on activities that can be easily safeguarded. Phased-in businesses and activities, with adherence to safeguarding and modification guidelines, include:
- When leaving home, New Jerseyans should wear a face covering and keep a social distance from others.
- Phased-in businesses may include:
 - Outdoor dining, Limited in-person retail, Child care centers reopen to all clients, In-person clinical research/labs, Limited fitness/gyms, Limited in-person government

services (e.g. – Motor Vehicle Commission), Museums/libraries, Hair salons and barber shops, Organized sports activities resume, Indoor portions of shopping malls reopen, Youth summer programs, Modified outdoor graduation ceremonies

- Indoor entertainment businesses, like movie theaters or arcades, will remain closed.
- All workers who can work from home should continue to work from home.
- Anticipated increased limits on outdoor gatherings.

Stage Three

- Restrictions are relaxed on most activities with significant safeguarding.
- All workers who can work from home continue to work from home.
- More work activities, including in-person meetings, are allowed at physical locations only if they can adhere to safeguarding guidelines and modifications.
- Phased-in businesses include:
 - Expanded dining, Critical in-office work, Limited entertainment, Expanded personal care, Bars with limited capacity, Public transit open to all, Child care/education changes
 - K-12 and higher education may operate in person with reduced capacity
 - Child care likely open for most
 - Day and summer camps likely open for all, but with modifications

Precautions that apply across all stages include:

- Work that can be done from home should continue to be done from home.
- Clinically high-risk individuals who can stay at home should continue to do so.
- All residents and businesses should follow state and federal safeguarding guidelines:
 - Wash hands
 - Wear masks in public
 - Respect social distancing
 - Minimize gatherings
 - Disinfect workplace and businesses
 - No mass gatherings

New Jersey will move toward subsequent stages based on data that demonstrates improvements in public health and the capacity to safeguard the public, including:

- Sustained improvements in public health indicators, including new COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, individuals in intensive care, and ventilator use.
- Substantial increase in testing and contact tracing capacity.
- Sufficient resilience in New Jersey's health care system to include adequate bed capacity, ventilators, personal protective equipment, and workforce.
- Widespread safeguarding of workplaces.
- Widespread safeguarding and capacity of child care, schools, and transit.
- Continued public compliance.

If public health indicators, safeguarding, or compliance worsen on a sustained basis, New Jersey will be prepared to move back to more restrictive stages as well.

Appendix C: Sources for face masks, cleaning products, and professional cleaning services

The Diocese of Newark has developed a list of sources for assisting congregations locate items needed in this Journey Forward. Please direct questions about your specific needs to Mr. Jim Caputo, Diocesan Property and Risk Manager, at jcaputo@dioceseofnewark.org.

Each congregation should make every effort to obtain their own supplies. However, if you encounter difficulties in locating supplies or this effort becomes prohibitively expensive, please speak to Jim.

Here is a list of websites from June 2020 that have products available. Please contact Jim for updates.

Products

Cinta.com

Uline.com 1-800-295-5510

Staples.com

OfficeDepot.com

Dollarite.com

Kingdon.com - face masks and sanitizing solution

Grainger.com

Professional Cleaning Services

Arthur Vincent, Co 1-800-842-7671

StanleySteamer.com

ServPro.com

ServiceMasters.com

Appendix D: June 23, 2020 Note from the initial Journey Forward Task Force

Since March 2020, our diocese, our state and country, and the Church as a whole, have experienced challenges unprecedented in our day and age because of the rise of the COVID-19 virus. To meet this health crisis, our Bishop Carlye J. Hughes announced that congregations in the Episcopal Diocese of Newark would fast from in-person public worship. This announcement was made in two stages: on March 13 for churches in the eastern part of the diocese, and on March 21 for all churches. This decision was taken for the safety and well-being of our parishioners and our wider communities. We shared in the love of God for all our neighbors, and we did so willingly. During this time the State of New Jersey also placed stay-at-home orders on civic and business communities as a health and safety measure to protect the people of our state, to reduce the transmission of the virus, and to keep our hospitals and health care system from being overwhelmed to the point of failure. Our medical workers and those deemed essential workers by the state have borne a heavy toll, many of them becoming ill with the virus themselves. Many more have suffered job losses and financial hardship. The education of children, while continuing through electronic means, has been hard on students, teachers, and families. People have struggled with loneliness and isolation as they have remained physically distant from friends and loved ones. More than 12,000 people in New Jersey (as of this writing) have died of COVID-19. This virus has impacted all of us in ways large and small.

God has been with us in all of it, and we have worked faithfully to remain a Spirit-led Church. We moved worship, formation, and pastoral care online and on the telephone. Parishioners developed creative responses to needs in their communities, often in partnership with neighbors in the wider community. We began to pray and read Scripture in the public arena of social media. We have made witness to the Biblical call for justice and peace for all God's people, in particular those who historically have been marginalized by our larger society. There have been many blessings, and many lessons learned about being followers of Jesus and being the Church during this time.

All of this has taken place while we have not been in our church buildings and have not been able to gather in person. There have been other times in our history and in the history of Judaism where we have been displaced from our worship spaces and had to find new ways to gather. In this time, we have learned how to be Christians in very different ways than before. And God has been with us in all of it, and we have trusted in God's presence. As the peak of COVID-19 transmission has declined in New Jersey, and as the Governor lifts restrictions on public gatherings, we will begin to worship in our buildings, on our grounds, and to add in-person meetings back into our congregational life. We will do this with prayer, care, and caution, asking for the wisdom of the Holy Spirit as we discern in each locality what will be best and safest for our parishioners and for the civic community.

These guidelines are offered for the lay and clergy leadership of each congregation to develop a plan for re-gathering as God's People in our buildings. We recognize that no guidelines and no plan will be perfect. There will always be some degree of risk as long as COVID-19 persists. It is up to members of each congregation to use their best judgement about how to implement these guidelines in their own locale. Let us remember that we express our love of God through the ways we love and care for each other.

The experience of the Church in the last three months has been disruptive and formative. We have learned how to be a “church without walls”. As we move back into our buildings with gratitude, let us sit lightly in them. Let us incorporate our new knowledge and experience of being “outside the walls” in a faithful and generous way, even as we gather for worship, formed for mission to God’s world in Jesus’ Name.

Faithfully,

The Rev. Victoria G. McGrath, Co-Chair

Ms. Patrice McKenzie, Co-Chair

The Journey Forward Task Force:

Ms. Yvonne Adighibe

The Rev. Dr. J. Brent Bates

Ms. Jody Caldwell

Ms. Renee Charney

The Rev. Mark R. Collins

Mr. Brian Crimmins

Ms. Amy Fink

Ms. Pamela Fueshko

The Rev. Robert Griner

The Rev. Thomas Murphy

The Rev. Andrew Olivo

Dr. James Sanderson

The Rev. Paula J. Toland

Advisors:

The Rev. Canon Andrew R. Wright, Canon to the Ordinary

Mr. James Caputo, Diocesan Property and Risk Manager

Forms

Form for Planning In-Person Outdoor Worship (Orange, Yellow Risk Levels)

Any plan for outdoor worship must be provided in writing to the Bishop's Office at least by noon on the Wednesday prior to the first such service. Email this form to Canon Wright at anwright@dioceseofnewark.org. One form is sufficient for a recurring similar service. The accompanying resource guide should be referenced to make your plan for worship.

Applicant name and title/role: _____ Date: _____

Email address: _____ Cell phone: _____

Congregation Name and Town/City: _____

Date for initial outdoor service: _____ Start time: _____ End time: _____

How many services are scheduled on one day? _____

Service: _____

How many participants can your outdoor space safely hold (please check most recent guidelines on maximum number) _____

Describe method of ensuring attendance below maximum (reservations, etc.): _____

Describe how you will log contact information for attendees, to allow contact tracing if necessary:

What steps are you taking to train Ushers and other liturgical ministers? _____

Describe the space intended for the service: _____

Is vocal music part of your planned service? _____

Describe steps taken to reduce risk from singing _____

Who are your designated Incident Responders? _____

On a separate page, please provide a drawn layout of the setup you intend for the service, noting location of liturgical ministers and furnishings, the spacing of congregational seating, and entry/exit traffic flow. This can be a photograph of a hand-drawn layout.

We, the undersigned leaders of _____

in _____, affirm that we have read and understood the Guidelines for In-Person Worship and will strive to follow it in any in-person outdoor worship gatherings that our church conducts. In addition, we affirm that we have the requisite hand sanitizer and masks to be supplied to parishioners as needed.

Rector/Vicar/Priest-in-charge: _____

Congregations without regular clergy may contact Canon Clark or Canon Wright, if assistance is needed.

Date: _____

Warden: _____ Date: _____

Warden: _____ Date: _____

Form for Planning In-Person Indoor Worship (Orange, Yellow Risk Levels)

Any plan for indoor worship must be provided in writing to the Bishop's Office at least by noon on the Wednesday prior to the first such service. Email this form to Canon Wright at awright@dioceseofnewark.org. One form is sufficient for a recurring similar service. The accompanying resource guide should be referenced to make your plan for worship.

Applicant name and title/role: _____ Date: _____

Email address: _____ Cell phone: _____

Congregation Name and Town/City: _____

Date for initial indoor service: _____ Start time: _____ End time: _____

How many services are scheduled on one day? _____

Service: _____

How many can your space safely hold (please check most recent guidelines on maximum number)?

Describe method of ensuring attendance below maximum (reservations, etc.): _____

Describe how you will log contact information for attendees, to allow contact tracing if necessary:

What steps are you taking to train Ushers and other liturgical ministers? _____

Describe your cleaning procedures including who will be doing the cleaning: _____

Is vocal music part of your planned service? _____

Describe steps taken to reduce risk from singing _____

Who are your designated Incident Responders? _____

On a separate page, please provide a drawn layout of the setup you intend for the service, noting location of liturgical ministers and furnishings, the spacing of congregational seating, and entry/exit traffic flow. This can be a photograph of a hand-drawn layout.

We, the undersigned leaders of _____

in _____, affirm that we have read and understood the Guidelines for In-Person Worship and will strive to follow it in any in-person indoor worship gatherings that our church conducts. In addition, we affirm that we have the requisite hand sanitizer and masks to be supplied to parishioners as needed.

Rector/Vicar/Priest-in-charge: _____

Congregations without regular clergy may contact Canon Clark or Canon Wright, if assistance is needed.

Date: _____

Warden: _____ Date: _____

Warden: _____ Date: _____