



The Episcopal Diocese of Newark

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Guidance for Outdoor Worship

May 27, 2020

On May 22, 2020, NJ Gov. Phil Murphy issued an official guideline permitting groups of up to 25 people to gather outdoors. This Guidance for Outdoor Worship has been developed in response to this state permission. If the official state position changes, diocesan policy may change accordingly, including withdrawal of permission for outdoor worship. As always, our highest goal is to safeguard the health and safety of our clergy, our members, and our neighbors.

Note: All congregations are urged to continue online worship, even if also gathering for outdoor services. No clergy are required to conduct in-person services, and clergy in high risk groups are expressly urged not to do so. Likewise, congregations with members in high-risk groups are urged to be cautious before establishing in-person outdoor worship.

Before an outdoor in-person service is held, the format and expectations will need to be clearly communicated with the congregation. An information sheet will be provided by the Bishop's Office for your use, after your service is approved.

Liturgy

Safe guidelines for Holy Communion are not yet available, therefore outdoor worship services may ONLY be Ante-Communion (Liturgy of the Word) or one of the Daily Offices (Morning Prayer, Noonday Prayer, Order of Worship for the Evening, Evening Prayer, or Compline) and must be without Holy Communion. This restriction includes Communion from Reserved Sacrament.

At this time, Holy Baptism is still available in the form of Emergency Baptism, which may be done within a household, but not as part of in-person worship, until further notice from the Bishop's office.

Weddings and Funerals remain effectively on hold and may not be officiated by clergy with others present at this time and until further notice from the Bishop's Office.

Because of the greater risk of transmitting COVID-19 through singing, there is to be no live singing or chanting of any kind by any number of people, including but not limited to officiant, soloist/cantor, and congregation. Instrumental music (with the exception of wind instruments) or recorded music is permitted.

No vestments or appointments (hangings, linens, etc.) that cannot be readily and safely sanitized both before and after the service shall be used. Altarware should not be in use since Holy Communion is not part of outdoor worship.

Masks and gloves must be available and worn by officiants, ushers, acolytes, and musicians; congregation members must also wear masks. Masks should not be removed for speaking during the service.

No paper bulletins, hymnals or prayerbooks are to be used or distributed. A member may bring their own personal prayer book and take it home with them afterwards. Any worship text needed may be

distributed electronically. Be sure to alert your congregation of this in advance so people come prepared.

Preaching and reading of scripture and prayers must be done from a location (lectern or similar) that is placed at least **30 measured feet** from the rest of the congregation. Each reader or speaker needs to read from a different location from one another. Good sound amplification will be necessary. Microphones should not be shared between readers without being sanitized. All microphones and other handled equipment will need to be sanitized before and after services.

Physical distancing of at least **6 measured feet** must be maintained at all times between each liturgical minister not in the same household and between liturgical ministers and congregation members, if not in the same household.

Online giving is the safest form for the offering and should be encouraged. The offering is not to be passed from person to person. Receptacles for the offering may be positioned at the entry and exit points of the space or other convenient locations, to help prevent close contact. At the end of the service, the offering should be secured and counted according to congregation practices, modified to ensure distancing, masks, and hand hygiene (gloves/hand sanitizer). The building may be accessed to secure the offering until it is counted and deposited.

There is to be no physical contact at the passing of the peace or in any other way before, during and after the liturgy. Clergy are particularly expected to model this.

Safe Gathering

If anyone planning to attend in-person worship feels ill in any way, they should NOT attend. If a churchgoer exhibits clear signs of illness during a service, the ushers will request that they return to their car and head home or to the doctor.

The maximum attendance is 25 persons. This includes all clergy, musicians, liturgical ministers, ushers, congregation (including children of all ages), etc. – everyone present. Attendance should be by advance reservation to maintain numbers. A complete record of all in attendance, including names and contact information (email and phone) shall be kept so as to allow contact tracing later, as needed. This record-keeping needs to take 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.

Each congregation will identify and publicize who to contact in the congregation in case an attendee has to report a possible COVID-19 infection following an in-person service. This may be the clergy, wardens, or vestry members or others designated by them.

Hand sanitizer and masks must be supplied by the church as needed for all in attendance. All present will wear masks at an outdoor service.

Those arriving after the 25-person maximum has been reached will not be seated at that service. Ushers will be prepared to invite anyone standing on the periphery and above the 25-person maximum to please return to their car and plan to return for another service or join in online worship.

Where possible, ushers should not be in high-risk categories. In all cases, they must be willing to serve in this more exposed capacity and able to be firm with fellow parishioners (re: masks, reservations, seating arrangements, etc.). Extra ushers and attendants (who count towards the maximum of 25) should be stationed so as to ensure procedures for entrance, parking and social

distancing are followed. 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.

Access to parking lots must be managed so as to maintain social distancing, for example using every other parking space, to avoid close interaction between parties in the parking lot.

Attention must be paid to entrance and exit placements to avoid inadvertent infringements on social distancing. If dismissing by rows is necessary to maintain order and social distancing, ushers must be trained and empowered to be clear.

Interior church spaces (including but not limited to all worship spaces, restrooms, classrooms, sacristy, choir room, vesting rooms, fellowship halls and any other spaces within buildings) are to remain completely closed and may not be used when people are present for outdoor worship (except for two distanced people securing the offering for the counters after the service). Parishioners MUST be informed of this well in advance. Allowed use of facilities, such as feeding ministries, should not occur at the same time as outdoor worship.

Chairs must be arranged so as to ensure social distancing. This must include a clear layout so that if family/household units place chairs near each, other proper distancing (6 feet minimum) is maintained between groups.

Christian formation for all age groups will remain online until further notice from the Bishop's office.

No "nursery care" will take place during in-person outdoor worship and, where present, no playground equipment may be utilized by children in attendance.

No food or drink may be served by the church. Individuals and households are encouraged to bring their own water, but it may not be handed out to other household groups. All trash must be taken out by each attendee/household.

After the service, ushers will be expected to keep parishioners moving out of the worship area, into their cars, and headed home. Gatherings on the grounds and in parking lots will be discouraged.

Scheduling

For congregations that anticipate more than 25 people who desire to gather in public worship outdoors, it is possible to schedule more than one outdoor service in a day, provided the following are observed:

After each gathering, all surfaces are sanitized, including chairs, sound system elements, and other furnishings.

A minimum of one hour between the end of one service and the beginning of another should be scheduled.

Form for Approval for In-Person Outdoor Worship

Any plan for outdoor worship must be approved in writing by the Bishop's Office at least 48 hours prior to the start time of the service. Email this form to Canon Wright at awright@dioceseofnewark.org. One form is sufficient for authorizing a recurring similar service.

Applicant name and title/role: _____ Date: _____

Email address: _____ Cell phone: _____

Congregation Name and Town/City: _____

Date for initial outdoor service: _____

Rite: _____ Ante-Communion _____ Morning Prayer

_____ Other Office (Which? _____)

How many services are scheduled on one day? _____ Start time: _____ End time: _____

Describe Method of Ensuring only 25 in Attendance (reservations, etc.): _____

Describe the space intended for the service: _____

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

Please certify the following:

“We, the undersigned leaders of _____

in _____, affirm that we have read the guidelines for outdoor worship and will follow them in any 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: _____

APPROVED BY – Name _____ Date: _____ Time: _____