

Returning to Public Worship in the Sanctuary

Entering and Exiting the Facility:

Use only the front entrance at Woodside Road to enter the narthex (entrance to the sanctuary) in order to avoid chokepoints in other areas of the building. These doors will be open and remain open throughout the worship service. Worshipers may exit the sanctuary using the Woodside exit or the second floor west parking lot exit, or they may exit from the lift (for lift users). Entering or exiting the facility to and from the ground floor entrances---and the use of the ground level---is discouraged.

There will be no “receiving lines” at either exit.

If the lift is used at the southwest entrance, please enter the sanctuary from the gym as usual.

Please proceed to the narthex for temperature screening before being seated for worship. There will be a health care professional or greeter from the congregation to **administer these temperature readings which will be performed with a device that is completely non-intrusive**. If temperature readings exceed 100.4 we ask that you not enter the worship space. (You may want to take a few minutes to “cool off” during hot weather before the screening.) **We strongly advise that if you are not feeling well, have been exposed to COVID-19, have a compromised immune system, or are at high risk of exposing others that you remain at home.**

If the lift is used at the southwest entrance, please enter the sanctuary from the gym as usual. We will take your temperature from your pew.

The wearing of face coverings (mask or shield) while in the facility are essential and required. Masks will be provided for those who have forgotten theirs at home or who do not bring their own.

Use of hand sanitizer stations located throughout the facility is also expected upon entering and exiting and will be provided by ushers at the Woodside entrance to the worship space.

Posted signs, describing the congregation’s policies and best hygiene practices, will be distributed throughout the building to assist worshipers in knowing how to proceed.

This signage will also map out clear routes of movement from the entryway into the worship space as well as areas of the facility which are closed to use.

Seating:

Some rows of pews will be cordoned-off in order to **ensure physical and social distancing (minimum of 6 feet)**. Members of households and families are encouraged to be seated together in one pew.

Printed worship folders will be pre-placed in the open rows of seating.

Fresh air will be provided by open windows and doors. It is not advisable to keep the fans on during worship as this can increase the spread of aerosol and droplets. The services will be abbreviated from the usual, but if you are susceptible to heat, please consider remaining at home.

All removable materials, including worship books, welcome cards, offering envelopes, pamphlets, and the like have been temporarily placed in storage. **Texts of liturgies, prayers, readings, hymns and procedural instructions will be included in these pre-placed worship folders.**

Worship:

One lector will serve for the First and Second Readings to avoid the need for sanitizing the lectern and microphone between readers. The lector, assisting minister and other vocal soloists will not need to wear face masks while they are speaking or singing as long as a minimum distance of 16 feet from other persons is maintained.

Singing, publicly voiced responses, and unison prayers will be offered by quietly speaking these with face coverings in place. (Singing together and unison speaking, even from a distance, are among the riskiest behaviors due to the spread of aerosol and droplets that are projected by using the voice in these ways and can carry the virus a significant distance and remain suspended in the air.) Singing hymns at home is strongly encouraged.

Sharing of the Peace: In lieu of a handshake, elbow pumps, or other physical contact, **a reverent bow to nearby persons is strongly encouraged** with the offering of these or similar words: "The peace of the Lord be with you."

Offering plates will be located at the front and back entrances to sanctuary. The plates will not be passed or presented at the Lord's Table to avoid direct surface contact.

The sermon will be offered from the pulpit. Pastor will not need to wear a face mask during the preaching as long as a minimum physical distance of 16 feet from other individuals is maintained. Pastor will use a wireless, lapel microphone throughout the service in order to avoid voice projection.

Vocal soloists, other musicians, lectors and assisting ministers will be placed at least 16 feet from the nearest individuals in the congregation.

The baptismal font will remain closed and emptied of water.

Before the celebration of Holy Communion, **the Presiding Minister and Assisting Minister will visibly hand sanitize to reassure communicants and, while standing at a distance from the Table, offer the words of consecration without touching the bread and cup.**

Distribution will be continuous, maintaining the requisite 6 feet between individuals. The wafers will be distributed with the use of a **specially designed dispenser (similar to a PEZ dispenser)** which allows for the wafer to remain untouched until it is received in your hands. **A sterilized, prepackaged eyedropper will be used to place a few drops of wine from the chalice directly onto the wafers** in order to avoid any contact with various containers and vessels. **Please return to your seat, then, while temporarily removing your face covering, you may consume the consecrated bread and wine from the place where you are seated.**

It is entirely understood by all in the congregation when individuals choose to refrain from receiving the elements during Communion due to their concern about the risks which may be involved.

Access to the Building:

Extensive and thorough sanitizing of the facility, especially the sanctuary and restrooms, has continuously taken place during the 3-month closure and will continue regularly and weekly as the facility is gradually reopened.

Restrooms on the second floor, across the gym from the sanctuary, may be used by **one individual at a time (single occupancy)**, and utilities must be cleaned with sanitary wipes (provided) after use.

The serving of food or drink in the form of coffee hours or other community meals is strongly discouraged until Phase 5 of Restore Illinois.

Please hold conversations outdoors before and after worship and avoid congregating in groups which may compromise the requisite physical distancing.

Worship for Those Who Cannot Attend In-person:

Our present intention is to **provide live-streaming of the liturgy for those persons not able** or reluctant to return to in-person, public worship. Also, outdoor worship services are to be planned for later in the summer after we have gotten underway from our life in the dispersion.

Conclusion:

The above expectations and guidelines have been gleaned from a number of documents received from churchwide and synodical organizations, the Centers for Disease Control, the Illinois Department of Public Health, the Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago, and other parishes and clergy. These are not “rules of the road” nor is anyone going to be assigned to enforce them. We are depending upon your good will and desire for the well-being of the church of God.

A Note from Pastor Dennis:

I want to emphasize that these recommendations and expectations are *less like* the Ten Commandments and *more like* that which Jesus defines as the greatest of the commandments, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength.’ And a second is like it, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

This plan is not etched in stone but shaped in warm clay that will continuously be formed and molded as we safely emerge from this time away from each other and the facility. Likewise, these are expectations adopted unanimously by the Congregation Council and are to be respected and implemented---not rules or regulations to be enforced. However, we do expect that individuals will be willing to set aside some personal liberties for a time in order to benefit the whole, particularly worshipers who may be at higher risk of contracting the virus and

disease. We trust the Holy Spirit to guide and shape this plan for proceeding as we open our hearts.

Of course, all of this seems very strange---even rather weird in some instances. Please keep in mind that this is for a season. And I hope that we will consider these to be acts of charity and love for each other, the well-being of the church, and especially for our elders in the faith who very much desire to gather in safety and confidence among the communion of saints. ---*djl*