

# **ROMAN CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. JOHN'S**

## **COVID-19 PARISH CHURCH AND PASTORAL MINISTRY GUIDELINES WHILE OPERATING UNDER ALERT LEVEL 2 JUNE 25, 2020**



# INDEX PAGE

<b>PREAMBLE.....</b>	<b>PAGE 3</b>
<b>SECTION I: BASIC GUIDELINES FOR OPENING CHURCH BUILDINGS.....</b>	<b>PAGE 4</b>
<b>SECTION II GUIDELINES OPENING CHURCHES FOR PRIVATE PRAYER AND RECONCILIATION .....</b>	<b>PAGE 10</b>
<b>SECTION III GUIDELINES FOR HAVING CHURCHES OPEN FOR PUBLIC MASS.....</b>	<b>PAGE 12</b>
<b>SECTION IV GUIDELINES FOR CELEBRATING MASS.....</b>	<b>PAGE 15</b>
<b>SECTION V GUIDELINES FOR WEDDINGS, BAPTISMS, FUNERALS AND OTHER RITES.....</b>	<b>PAGE 18</b>
<b>SECTION VI GUIDELINES FOR PASTORAL CARE OF THE SICK AND THE HOMEBOUND.....</b>	<b>PAGE 20</b>
<b>RESOURCES CONSULTED.....</b>	<b>PAGE 22</b>
<b>APPENDIX A: PARISH PREPAREDNESS CHECKLIST.....</b>	<b>PAGE 23</b>
<b>APPENDIX B: REPLY FORM FOR PARISHES- TO COMPLETE AND SEND BACK TO THE ARCHDIOCESE.....</b>	<b>PAGE 26</b>
<b>APPENDIX C: GUIDANCE FOR FAITH BASED ORGANIZATIONS: GOVERNMENT OF NL.....</b>	<b>PAGE 27</b>

### Preamble

The situation of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve in our province, country and world. The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of St. John's takes the health and well being of all its members and all citizens seriously and seeks to be a responsible partner with Public Health and the Government of Newfoundland to do what we can to protect people and help stop the spread of COVID-19. At the same time, we recognize that the spiritual well being of people is also vitally important during this pandemic. The following are the guidelines the Archdiocese of St. John's will use in re-opening its churches for public worship at Alert Level 2 in compliance with the public health measures of the Chief Medical Officer of Health and the Government of Newfoundland & Labrador.

We acknowledge that many of these guidelines will feel strange and be an uncomfortable adjustment. However, they are grounded in the very best of our faith tradition that tells us that I am my brother and sister's keeper; Jesus taught us love God and your neighbour as yourself. These guidelines, at their root, come from the Gospel and our religious values of care and compassion for one another.

## SECTION I: BASIC GUIDELINES FOR OPENING CHURCH BUILDINGS

### 1. General Guidelines Applicable to all Parishes

- (a) Each parish must assess if they are ready to open based on their ability to enact these guidelines. The time needed to prepare for opening is left to the discretion of the pastor and his advisers in consultation with the Archdiocese. Each pastor is ultimately responsible for the implementation of these guidelines in his parish.
- (b) All people of the Archdiocese are dispensed from their obligation to attend Sunday Mass and those who are elderly, frail, or at higher risk of complications due to COVID-19 are encouraged to not attend public worship at this time.
- (c) At Alert Level 2, a maximum of 50 people will be permitted in the church at one time. This number will include clergy, staff, and volunteers.
- (d) At Alert Level 2, gatherings for funerals, burials, weddings, and baptisms are permitted, being restricted to a maximum of 50 people (this number includes the presider all others involved). Masses for funerals and weddings are permitted and within the health and safety guidelines stated.
- (e) Anyone showing symptoms of illness should stay home. Virtual worship should be maintained at Level 2 and into the foreseeable future for those who cannot come to church for prayer and worship.
- (f) A priest who is sick should avoid celebrating public Masses or administering any sacraments at this level.
- (g) There will be clear markings on the floor and in seating to direct people to maintain physical distancing measures of 2m (6ft.). There is to be no physical contact of any kind among people in the church.
- (h) Wherever possible, there will be a marked separate entrance and exit to the church for the public to use.
- (i) The use of face coverings/masks is **recommended** for all over the age of 2 years during the duration of the visit in the church.
- (j) Proper hand hygiene **is required**. The public will be encouraged to bring and use their own hand sanitizer and churches will also provide hand sanitizing stations at the church entrance and exit.
- (k) Churches will be regularly cleaned and disinfected.

(l) Contact tracing is required by churches. Names and phone numbers must be kept by the parish for two weeks with date and time of the visit.

(m) Churches will post appropriate signage listing COVID-19 health and safety guidelines, capacity restrictions, etc. at the entrances of and inside their properties and also make this information available on their websites and social media platforms.

(n) Before opening, churches must provide training regarding the implementation of these guidelines to staff and volunteers.

(o) We undertake these measures with the physical safety and health of our congregations uppermost in mind. Equally, we hold the spiritual well being of our congregations in the highest regard. We want our congregations to know that we will take every measure within our ability to ensure their safe return to church. However, people must note that there is an inherent risk, regardless of age and health, in attending any public event, including private visitation at church or attending a religious service. While we warmly welcome people to celebrate the Eucharist as part of the community, please know that given the realities of Covid-19, they attend church at their own risk.

(p) Churches need to ensure that staff, volunteers and congregants are utilizing PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) that is appropriate to their role. For example, congregants are recommended to wear masks and bring their own. Likewise, staff and volunteers are recommended to wear masks for cleaning and staffing entrances. Wearing gloves is also advisable. Churches should not have to bear the burden of supplying masks to congregants, but they will have to ensure that PPE, such as is available to staff and volunteers who need it. Churches will have to assess for themselves how best to do this.

## **2. Physical and Social Distancing**

(a) Physical distancing is now universally applicable. Except for members of the same household (or bubble), a physical distance of 2m (6ft) must be maintained at all times everywhere on the church property (i.e. in the church, on the steps, in the parking lot, etc.). There must be no physical contact among people in the church of any kind. Members of a single household (or bubble) are not required to practice social distancing and may sit together.

(b) A church should have one clearly marked entrance into the church and a clearly marked separate exit. If possible, at least one entrance should be open and accessible to the handicapped. When possible, entrance and exit doors should be propped open to avoid having to disinfect frequently touched door handles.

(c) Clear one-way markings, taped on the floor, walls, pillars etc. should be used to direct people to and from the available seating areas, Communion and confessional lines, entrances and exits. Spacing for line-ups must be 2m/6ft apart.

(d) Mark available seating in and around pews so that the 2m/6ft radius around each seat is established. This will mean limiting the number of people in a pew as well as closing off pews in front and behind available seats. Available seating should be clearly marked and unavailable seating should be closed to people and clearly marked as well. In larger churches, entire sections may be cordoned off. Painter's tape can be used as it will not damage pews. Instead of using pews, a church may decide to place individual chairs for seating.

(e) Members of the same household/bubble do not need to practice physical distancing. Thus, pews for bubbles may be designated as such.

(f) Ushers will need to be available to help direct traffic and to maintain physical distance while people are being seated and when they move about the church.

### **3. Hygiene and Cleaning/Disinfecting**

#### **(a) Individual Persons**

(i) The use of a face covering/mask is recommended, but it is not required if you maintain physical distance from others who are not in your "bubble". Those individuals wishing to wear a mask, are requested to provide their own.

(ii) Upon entering the church, each person will be required to sanitize their hands. Each church will have hand sanitizer available at the entrance and exit. An automatic dispenser is preferable. As well, the public will be encouraged to bring their own hand sanitizer.

#### **(b) Frequently Touched Surfaces**

(I) All frequently touched surfaces must be sanitized on an ongoing basis, and especially in-between services. These surfaces include pews, kneelers, door handles, light switches, etc.

(ii) An adequate stock of hand sanitizer and other cleaning supplies, including disposable gloves for cleaners, should be readily available at the time of reopening.

(iii) Due to the need for strict cleaning and sanitizing, it is recommended that restrooms be used only for emergencies. Only one person at a time may use a washroom. Signs for hand washing should be posted inside and outside the

washroom. Washrooms must be thoroughly cleaned, if used, every time the church is open to the public.

(iv) Holy Water and baptismal fonts will remain empty, and all hymnals, books, pew cards and other loose items must be removed from the pews that are designated for seating.

(v) Kneelers in front of statues and vigil lights should be removed. Wood or wax lighting tapers should only be used once for lighting vigil candles and then discarded. Alternatively, a visitor may leave their intention/offering, and a designated volunteer will light a vigil candle on their behalf.

(vi) All staff and volunteers engaged in cleaning should wear a mask and gloves. They must also wash/sanitize their hands before and after the cleaning process.

#### **4. Responsibilities of Volunteers/Staff**

(a) It is recommended that it would be helpful if each Parish have a Pandemic Guidelines Committee in place to assist the Pastor in coordinating the planning and implementation of COVID-19 guidelines in their parish.

(b) Volunteers and staff will need to be trained regarding these guidelines. They will be the first point of contact for visiting parishioners and should be clearly identifiable (e.g. by a badge or some other means).

(c) The church will need to keep a detailed list of those who have visited the church to assist public health officials with possible contact tracing.

(d) Ushers/greeters will need to be stationed at the church entrance to check off/record the name, address, and phone number of each visitor for contact tracing.

(e) As each visitor enters, the usher/greeter will either verbally ask, or direct the person to read the a posted COVID-19 Assessment Tool which includes the following questions:

HAVE YOU:

- Traveled outside the Province in the past 14 days?
- Been required to self-isolate or quarantine in the last 14 days?
- Been diagnosed with COVID-19?
- Been tested for COVID-19 and are awaiting results?
- Been experiencing any cold or flu-like symptoms which may include: aches, muscle pain, runny nose, fever, cough, and shortness of breath?

(f) The Parish must refuse entry to anyone who has replied yes to any of these questions and/or who refuses to follow the safety guidelines.

(g) The ushers/greeters will explain the requirements of physical distancing and direct the visitor to sanitize their hands as they enter the church.

(h) The ushers/greeters will direct the visitor to the available seating.

(i) Ushers/greeters will be responsible for limiting the number of visitors to the maximum of 50 at Alert Level 2. Visitors must be asked to wait outside or come back later if the church has reached this capacity.

(j) Volunteers/staff will be responsible for cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces as described above. A log of cleaning must be kept to demonstrate due diligence.

## **5. Communications**

Communication should be sent out to the parish and wider community by whatever means are conveniently available (parish web page, social media, mail, email, etc.) to inform them of the parish COVID-19 safety guidelines including the COVID-19 Self Assessment Tool.

(a) Signs should be placed on the door of the church to indicate the schedule for the opening of the church (i.e. times for prayer/adoration/confession, Mass) and the maximum capacity for occupancy for Level 2.

(b) Physical distancing and sanitizing guidelines should be posted at the entrance of the church and wherever appropriate.

(c) Here are some helpful suggestions for how to communicate re-opening plans with the public:

Draft a letter to parishioners outlining the protocols and changes. See the letter as a pastoral opportunity as well; thank parishioners for their support and prayers, acknowledge what people are feeling and offer a heartfelt “welcome back” message. Tell them the church will look different when they get back, people may not be able to sit where they always have, how we do things will be different, but if we all come with an open mind we can adjust and continue to be the strong community we have always been. Assure them that we have their physical and spiritual health and safety upper most in our minds. In other words, setting the right tone will be important.

- i. Share the above information via the parish’s social media platforms and parish website.

- ii. Change parish office voicemail to communicate some of this plan.
- iii. Also prepare similar thoughts for a verbal 'Welcome back' message at the start of Mass and continue to do that for a while until people are well informed.

**SECTION II:**  
**GUIDELINES FOR OPENING CHURCHES FOR PRIVATE PRAYER AND  
RECONCILIATION**

**1. General Guidelines**

- (a) The opening of parish churches for private prayer is voluntary and dependent upon the assessment by the local parish of its ability to be in compliance with the guidelines outlined by the Department of Health and the Archdiocese. Each parish will determine the time period (i.e. number of hours and days per week) that is realistic for them to have their church open.
- (b) Pastors and Administrators, in consultation with their Parish Pastoral Council, Liturgical Committee, Parish Support Staff and others concerned, must communicate clearly and effectively with their parishioners their plans for if, when, and how they will open their church for prayer.
- (c) Signs should be placed on the door of the church to indicate the schedule for opening of the church for prayer/adoration/confession and the maximum capacity for occupancy.
- (d) The ushers/greeters should be stationed at the church entrance to record the name, address, and phone number of each visitor for contact tracing.

**2. Sacrament of Reconciliation in Church**

- (a) The priest must be physically present to the penitent in person. Electronic devices that take the place of in person confession (i.e. phone or computer) are not permitted.
- (b) The priest should hear confessions in a room that is large enough to maintain the recommended social distance (i.e. in the sacristy, chapel, meeting room, or a quiet place in the main body of the church) and not in a small confessional.
- (c) A distance of 2m (6ft) must be maintained between priest and penitent at all times.
- (d) A face mask is recommended for both priest and penitent.
- (e) Some suitable means should also be provided for a penitent to make an anonymous confession if they wish (i.e. a portable kneeler with a screen, a screen placed on a table, etc.).

(f) A designated area should be set up where penitents can line up at a safe distance from one another. Designated chairs or markings with tape on the floor would be helpful. An usher could guide people to the appropriate waiting area.

(g) Sanitize the arm rest of the kneeler or the chair that the penitent uses after each confession. A wooden, metal, or plastic chair may be more easily wiped down. Regularly sanitize the door handle of the confessional room.

(h) A priest might also consider hearing confessions outdoors maintaining social distancing, avoiding physical contact, and observing all health and safety protocols for COVID-19.

## **SECTION III: GUIDELINES FOR HAVING CHURCHES OPEN FOR PUBLIC MASS**

### **1. Dispensation**

The dispensation from attendance at Sunday Mass will continue during Alert Level 2.

### **2. Capacity**

(a) During Alert Level 2, 50 people are permitted to be present at a Mass (this includes the priest, servers, volunteers).

(b) If parishes decide to schedule more Masses, they are reminded that priests are permitted to celebrate two Masses per weekday and three on a Sunday. If more Masses are needed, priests must first contact the Archbishop for permission. People can also be encouraged to attend daily Mass in lieu of weekend Masses.

(c) Each parish may have to employ a system to regulate the number of people who attend Mass. Such a system might include registering by phone at the parish office or online using reservations platforms such as: Eventbrite, Survey Monkey, Sign Up Genius, etc. telephone reservations, alphabetical rotation (i.e. one mass is for people with last names A-G, another Mass H-L), or on a first come, first serve basis.

(d) Once capacity is reached, additional people must not be allowed entry into the building.

(e) However parishes decide to schedule masses, they must allow the necessary time between Masses for cleaning and disinfecting of commonly touched surfaces and sacred vessels, volunteer shift change and any other preparatory work deemed necessary.

(f) To help parishes prepare, the first public Mass could be a weekday Mass, to help them test their guidelines and make any revisions in preparation for a weekend Mass.

### **3. Assembly**

(a) All in the assembly over 2 years old (with the exception of the priest and ministers) may wear a mask or cloth face covering.

(b) There should be no physical contact of any kind during the Mass.

#### **4. The Priest**

Aside from when distributing Holy Communion, the priest should not wear a face covering during the celebration of Mass. He must sanitize his hands before and after Mass and also before and after the distribution of Holy Communion. Aside from distributing Holy Communion, the priest must adhere to physical distancing at all times.

#### **5. Sacristy**

Entrance to the sacristy should be limited to those who are required to prepare for the liturgy. If the room is small and does not allow for the required distancing, one person at a time should use the room. All surfaces in the room are to be kept clean.

#### **6. Altar Servers**

Only a single altar server may assist at Mass. His/her role should be limited to the procession, ringing of the bells (if customary in a parish), and removing items from the altar after Communion (if necessary). The server should sanitize his/her hands before and after Mass. If a server is present, the server must adhere to physical distancing requirements.

#### **7. Preparations before Mass**

- (a) A basket should be placed near the entrance and the exit of the church for parishioners to place their offerings.
- (b) On the side of the altar or on a credence table near the altar, the bread and wine needed for the Mass should be placed, as well as all necessary sacred vessels, linens, hand sanitizer, and lavabo for the priest.
- (c) A small table with a hand sanitizer should be placed at each station where the distribution of Holy Communion will take place.
- (d) Announcements before Mass could be made to describe the necessary guidelines, especially for the reception of Holy Communion.

#### **8. Hospitality**

Ushers/Greeters will need to be stationed at the Church entrance to check off/record the name, address and phone number for each visitor for contact tracing and to direct people to the hand sanitizers and to their seats.

## **9. Music During Mass**

- (a) Parishioners attending Mass shall be advised to not sing on account of the potential spreading of airborne contagion.
- (b) A cantor (accompanied by a single instrumentalist) may sing at Mass as long as the cantor is a minimum of 10 feet (3 meters) distant from anyone else while singing. Choirs are not permitted at Level 2.
- (d) All hymnals, books, and pew cards must be removed from pews.

## **10. Microphones**

Microphones must not be shared. The lector, the priests and the cantor (if used), must use separate microphones.

## **11. Drive In Masses**

The Chief Medical Officer has permitted “drive in” Masses under the following guidelines:

- (a) Vehicles must be kept two meters apart.
- (b) People must stay in their vehicles.

Communion guidelines are the same as for the Mass in the Church, except that a server must accompany the Priest/Minister with hand sanitizer.

## **12. Mass/Overflow Crowd in Parish Halls**

As well as having a maximum of 50 people in the church, the Chief Medical Officer has permitted another maximum of 50 people to participate in the Mass via a video link (or to have a second Mass) in a Parish Hall under the following guidelines:

- (a) The Hall has its own separate entrance and exit.
- (b) The Hall has a capacity for 50 people with proper social distancing.
- (c) The Minister bringing Holy Communion from the church has practised proper social distancing from the people in the church.

Guidelines for the distribution of Holy Communion are the same as for the distribution of Holy Communion in the church.

## **SECTION IV: GUIDELINES FOR CELEBRATING MASS**

### **1. Entrance Procession**

If there is a procession, it is recommended that only the priest and a single server participate in it. Physical distancing should be maintained. If the Book of the Gospels is used, it should be placed on the altar before Mass.

### **2. Introductory Rites**

The priest leads the introductory rites in the usual manner either from the chair or at the altar. A simple lectern should be used rather than having a server hold the book.

### **3. Liturgy of the Word**

The Liturgy of the Word takes place in the usual way. Only one reader should be assigned to read both readings.

### **4. Children's Liturgy of the Word**

Children's Liturgy of the Word is not permitted at Alert Level 2.

### **5. Offertory**

(a) The usual procession of bread and wine will not take place at Alert Level 2. Instead the bread and wine used for the liturgy of the Eucharist will be placed on a credence table near the altar or on the altar to the side, before the beginning of Mass.

(b) There should be baskets/containers placed at the church entrance and exit for the collection.

(c) The preparation of the gifts and the washing of the hands should be done by the priest alone without the assistance of a server.

### **6. Eucharistic Prayer**

(a) At the preparation of the gifts the host for the priest should be placed on a corporal directly in front of the priest as usual. Hosts for the faithful should be placed on a second corporal towards the side of the altar. This allows the priest to offer the words of consecration without speaking directly over the hosts that will be consumed by the faithful. The hosts for the faithful may remain covered with a pall, purificator, or ciborium cover during the Eucharistic Prayer.

(b) The Sign of Peace is given in a non-contact, social distancing manner.

## **7. Communion Rite**

a) Given the number of communicants, Holy Communion should be distributed by the priest alone, or if the priest is of an advanced age or a tenuous health situation, an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion can distribute Holy Communion for him.

(b) Whomever distributes Holy Communion must wear a mask and must perform hand sanitization before and after the distribution of Holy Communion.

(c) The Precious Blood will not be distributed.

(d) For Holy Communion, the individual attestation at the moment of distribution of Holy Communion (“The Body of Christ, R: Amen”) is eliminated; instead one general pronouncement (“The Body of Christ”) is to be made by the priest, and one general response (“Amen”) is to be made by all congregants together before the distribution begins. Then each person who wishes to receive the Blessed Sacrament comes forward in procession and receives in silence.

(e) Before distributing Communion, the priest should explain to the congregation the guidelines for receiving Holy Communion and having done so, he would show the host and lead the attestation.

(f) Communicants should line up at a distance of 2m from each other. Markings on the floor will help ushers to direct the people.

(g) Each communicant must sanitize their hands before receiving Holy Communion. (either their own sanitizer or one on the small table at the Communion station.)

(h) The communicant receives the Body of Christ in the hand from the priest and then moves to the side. (If he/she is using a mask, it is at that point they remove the mask and consume the Host.)

(Acknowledging that receiving Holy Communion on the tongue is a right of all the faithful, (Redemptionis Sacramentum, n. 92) nevertheless ecclesiastical authority is to regulate rights in view of the common good (can. 223, 2) In the present exceptional circumstances, knowing that COVID-19 can be spread through respiratory droplets, Holy Communion will be distributed in the hand. This is a temporary measure to be reviewed on an on-going basis in the light of developing medical advice.)

(i) The priest should try to distribute Holy Communion in a way that does not make direct contact between his/her hand and the communicant. If there is

physical contact the minister should pause, sanitize his/her hands, and continue as usual.

(j) Following the distribution of Holy Communion, the remaining Hosts are placed in the Tabernacle and the vessels are put to the side to be purified following Mass.

## **8. Concluding Rites**

(a) The Mass concludes in the usual manner. People should be reminded to exit the church through the appropriate door and not linger for social conversation.

(b) Bulletins should be available electronically, or paper copies can be distributed by an usher wearing gloves and mask as people exit the building.

(c) All frequently touched surfaces should be cleaned after each weekday or Sunday Mass.

## **SECTION V:**

### **GUIDELINES FOR WEDDINGS, BAPTISMS, FUNERALS, AND OTHER RITES**

#### **Other Rites Celebrated in the Church**

Since these rites take place in the church, the requirements for preparing the space, physical distancing, the use of music and procedures for liturgical ministers as they apply to the particular rite are to be observed. These rules are the same as for Masses.

#### **1. Baptism**

The Sacrament of Baptism is celebrated in the usual manner according to the Rite of Baptism. With the exception of the child, non-medical masks must be worn by all participants. In order to respect physical distancing and to limit the number of participants, it is recommended that baptisms not be celebrated during Mass at this time. Baptisms should take place with as small a group as possible keeping the numbers designated by health authorities. Physical distancing must be maintained by all except the parents and child and those in the same household (bubble). It is important that physical distancing be maintained among family and friends. The priest, should wear a mask and sanitize his hands before the pouring of water and after the anointing with Chrism. The priest should use a cotton ball or glove to anoint with Holy Chrism. The water in the font is to be replaced after each baptism.

#### **2. Christian Initiation of Adults**

The Christian Initiation of Adults (including children of catechetical age) is celebrated during Mass, since the rite includes the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist. The Reception into Full Communion is also to be celebrated during Mass. Because of numbers in gatherings, it is recommended that these rites take place at this time during weekday Masses, or at a special Mass and not during the Sunday Mass.

#### **3. Marriage**

Great care must be made to meet with the couple and properly organize the wedding Mass/Ceremony with the covid-19 restrictions. Marriages may be celebrated with small communities, according to the number of people permitted by health authorities. As with other religious services, it is recommended that the attendants and guests wear non-medical masks. The norms for physical distancing pertain to all present including the presider with the exception of the bride and groom.

#### **4. Funerals**

Funerals may be celebrated in the church with a Mass or without a Mass, according to the number of people permitted by health authorities. Priests will collaborate with the Funeral Home staff and family to take all the necessary precautions to ensure the health and safety of all who participate. All the guidelines for Masses: physical distancing, wearing of non-medical masks, etc. must be followed.

#### **5. First Communion and Confirmation**

Given the restrictions to the number permitted at public worship at Alert Level 2, First Communion and Confirmation will be delayed until further notice.

## **SECTION V: GUIDELINES FOR PASTORAL CARE OF THE SICK AND THE HOMEBOUND**

Home visitation of parishioners should proceed with caution at Alert Level 2. The following guidelines are intended to help priests offer the sacraments of Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, and Holy Communion to parishioners at home when there is sufficient reason. As usual, these sacraments may be administered individually or in a continuous rite as needed.

The following guidelines are intended for the visitation of a person having no COVID-19 symptoms and no suspicion of close contact with a COVID-19 person. Nevertheless, appropriate precautions must always be taken since the priest or parishioner could be carrying the virus without symptoms. In the case of a person who is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 and is self-isolating at home, the priest should postpone the visit until the person is deemed medically safe to visit. Those who are confirmed to have a COVID-19 and are seriously ill should be cared for in a hospital by an appointed chaplain.

### **1. General Considerations**

- (a) Before visiting a parishioner at home, make certain the parishioner desires a pastoral visit. Some, especially those who are vulnerable due to old age or underlying health problems, may wish to avoid contact with anyone outside their home even at Alert Level 2.
- (b) The priest must wear a mask/face covering throughout the visit.
- (c) The priest should remain at least 2 meters (6 ft) from the recipient for the entire visit, except when required by the Rite (i.e. the moment of anointing or giving Holy Communion).
- (d) There should be no physical contact with the recipient unless required by the Rite (e.g. moment of anointing).
- (e) The priest should give Holy Communion in such a way as not to make physical contact with the communicant. If there is direct physical contact, the priest should sanitize his hands immediately.
- (f) The priest should avoid contact with surfaces in the home as much as possible.
- (g) The priest should select a location more than 2 m (6 ft) from the recipient where he can set out the items he will use during the visit (e.g. oil stock, ritual book, pyx etc.). He should ensure that the surface is clean and has recently been

disinfected. After the visit, the priest should wipe clean the items he used with an appropriate disinfecting wipe.

(h) The priest may wear a glove for anointing but not for giving Holy Communion. A disposable glove or cotton ball should be used for the Anointing of the Sick. The instrument of anointing should be placed in a paper bag to be burned.

(i) The priest should keep the visit as brief as possible and not linger for unnecessary conversation.

(j) The priest should perform hand hygiene immediately before and after the visit and after any direct physical contact with the recipient. The priest may want to keep a bottle of hand sanitizer in his car as well as a supply of disinfecting wipes.

## PRINCIPAL RESOURCES CONSULTED

1. *NLife with Covid-19*, from the Government of Newfoundland & Labrador.
2. *The Working Group on Infectious Disease Guidelines for Sacraments & Pastoral Care* as developed by the Thomistic Institute of the Pontifical Faculty of the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, DC, USA.
3. *Re-opening the Church for Masses* by Archbishop Brian Dunn, Coadjutor Archbishop of the Diocese of Halifax-Yarmouth.
4. *Guidelines for Reopening of Masses with a Congregation, Archdiocese of Vancouver*
5. *Instructions on Resumption of in-Parish worship and Access to Parish Facilities*, Archdiocese of Atlanta, USA.
6. Archdiocese of Chicago, <https://www.archchicago.org/coronavirus/reopening>
7. *Guidance for Places of Worship*, Government of Alberta, [www.alberta.ca/BizConnect](http://www.alberta.ca/BizConnect)
8. *Practical Considerations and Recommendations for Religious Leaders and Faith-Based Communities in the Context of Covid-19*, World Health Organization, 7 April, 2020.
9. *WORSHIPS SAFE: Directives Concerning Church Operations, Pandemic & Epidemic Emergency Situations*, Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario, June 1, 2020.
10. *Guidelines for the Reintroduction of the Public Celebration of Holy Mass*, Catholic Archdiocese of Groulx-McLennan

## APPENDIX A

### **Parish Preparedness Checklist for the Parish Priest**

The purpose of this checklist is to help you, in your parish, prepare well for the day when we resume the public celebration of Mass.

Resumption of the public celebration of Mass will depend on our preparedness to meet all health and safety requirements. It will be important to use this checklist before the first public celebration of Mass.

General Principles:

1. The health and safety of our volunteers and parishioners, as well as those with whom they come into contact, is of paramount concern.
2. All NL Health and government regulations must be observed.
3. Churches must not offer public Mass if the parish cannot guarantee that NL government and Archdiocesan regulations will be observed.
4. The Eucharist is the heart of our community; all church norms must be observed to ensure the dignified celebration of the Eucharist.
5. Prior to the Opening of the parish church and the resumption of Masses, the parishes must be well-prepared with health and safety supplies and volunteer training.

### **Parish Priest Checklist**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Our schedule of Mass times provides sufficient time for cleaning and disinfecting of the church.
- \_\_\_\_\_ We have had adequate communication of the plans to parishioners.
- \_\_\_\_\_ We have recruited and trained a safety coordinator who will help us oversee the implementation of all health and safety guidelines for each Mass.
- \_\_\_\_\_ We have recruited and trained the required number of ushers and volunteers.

- \_\_\_\_\_ The parish priest and the Safety Coordinator for each Mass have an agreed process for the arrival and departure of the congregants and proper entrance and exit signage is set up.
- \_\_\_\_\_ We have made sure doors can be propped open and will stay open if possible.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The Parish Priest and the Safety Coordinator for each Mass have done a walkabout to check the key areas designated as entrances and exits.
- \_\_\_\_\_ We have proper signage posted for all health and safety protocols.
- \_\_\_\_\_ We have a plan for managing the use of washrooms with proper distancing – Washrooms should be restricted to one for emergency use only. Proper sanitizing of this space is required.
- \_\_\_\_\_ We have areas with hand sanitizers clearly marked.
- \_\_\_\_\_ We have ensured Holy Water fonts are empty.
- \_\_\_\_\_ We have removed from the pews and tables loose items that are difficult to disinfect, such as hymn books, missalettes, brochures, donation envelopes, etc.
- \_\_\_\_\_ We have ensured pews have been marked or roped off to ensure proper physical distancing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ We have placed markings on floors on the main aisle and side aisles to guide proper physical distancing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Our confessional space has been identified and properly set up.
- \_\_\_\_\_ We have established a method of proper contact tracing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ We have a planned method of collection keeping all mentioned protocols.
- \_\_\_\_\_ We have secured a highly visible area for the collection baskets as well as designated ushers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ We have the Sanctuary set up for proper physical distancing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ We have placed the credence table beside the altar if needed.
- \_\_\_\_\_ We have placed a table where the priest stands to distribute Holy Communion and placed a hand sanitizer pump and a corporal to be used during the distribution of Holy Communion

- \_\_\_\_\_ For the priest, we have a face mask, placed on the credence table before Mass for distribution of Holy Communion.
- \_\_\_\_\_ We and the ushers have a planned process for the distribution of Holy Communion
- \_\_\_\_\_ If your church has devotion candle areas, you have a plan for their safe use. Will they be marked for proper physical distancing? Do they need to be roped off and access restricted?
- \_\_\_\_\_ We have locked unused areas in the church facility (parish hall, cry rooms, meeting rooms, storage areas, choir loft etc.
- \_\_\_\_\_ We have met with the cleaning and disinfecting staff/volunteer team to designate high-touch areas that need to be cleaned and sanitized before and between Masses- doorknobs, light switches, toilet handles, faucets and taps, elevator buttons, railings, public phones, surface counters, equipment, etc.
- \_\_\_\_\_ We have an area with PPE supplies (gloves, disposable masks) for cleaners and ushers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ We have an area with cleaning and disinfecting supplies and have a plan for disposal or washing of cleaning supplies.

**Source:**  
**Archdiocese of Grouard -McLennan**



**Roman Catholic Archdiocese of St. John's, NL**

**Parish Church Opening Plan**

**Name of Parish:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Opening Church for private prayer:** No  Yes  **Date beginning to open:**

**Private Prayer Times: Weekdays:**

**Weekend:**

**Opening Church(es) for Public Mass:** No  Yes  **Date of Opening:**

**Date of First Weekend Masses:**

**Weekend Mass Times: Saturday: Sunday:**

**Date of First Weekday Masses:**

**Weekday Mass Times: Monday - Friday**

**Remarks:**

**I have reviewed the Archdiocesan Guidelines for Alert Level 2 and confirm that this parish will follow these guidelines.**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_  
D / M / Y

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Parish Priest**

**Opening the parish churches for private prayer and /or public worship, each parish is to complete this form and return it to the Archbishop via email at [archbphundt@rcsj.org](mailto:archbphundt@rcsj.org)**

### Guidance for Faith-Based Organizations

In Alert Level 2, places of worship may host services and faith-based activities of no more than 50 people, or 50 per cent capacity, whichever is less. This limit includes staff and volunteers.

To best prevent the spread of COVID-19, places of worship are encouraged to continue hosting services and faith-based activities online or through drive-in services. Social gatherings that normally occur before and after a service (e.g. communal dinners and lunches) should be avoided at this time.

#### Know the Risks

Faith-based services pose a risk of COVID-19 transmission through:

- Gatherings;
- Sharing of ceremonial objects, food and drink; and
- Singing; and
- Playing of wind instruments.

We also know that individuals over 60 and those with chronic conditions are at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

To support public health contact tracing efforts in the event that an attendee at the place of worship tests positive for COVID-19, organizers should ask individuals to provide their name and contact information when attending faith-based activities and events in person. Provision of contact information is voluntary and individuals can access the place of worship even if they choose not to sign in upon entry. Faith-based organizations will have full ownership of their attendance lists, and will only be asked to share attendance lists with Public Health if a potential exposure occurs at the facility. Lists can be discarded after 14 days.

#### Promote Physical Distancing

- a) Physical distancing of 2 metres (6 feet) must be between congregants. People from the same bubble can sit together without physical distancing.
- b) Arrange or mark seating to ensure physical distancing between individuals who are not in the same bubble.
- c) Registration of participants is encouraged to effectively manage the number of individuals attending, and can assist faith-based organizations in keeping a record of attendance for contact tracing efforts. Avoid registration processes where attendees have to use common-use items such as pens and pencils. Instead, have attendees use their own writing utensils, or have a staff member or volunteer record names. Registration through phone or online processes is encouraged.
- d) Use visual cues to support physical distancing, such as floor markings and [posters](#). Verbal reminders of physical distancing are also recommended.
- e) Implement one-way traffic flow (e.g. enter through one door and exit through another, designating smaller aisles as one-way).

- f) Control and stagger entry into, and exit from, the place of worship before and after services (e.g. by dismissing individuals by household or section, rather than all at once).
  - 1. Identify areas, such as lobbies, where crowding and bottlenecks are common, and use volunteers, staff, or barriers to redirect people who may gather in these areas.
  - 2. If multiple gatherings are held on a single day, the start and end times must allow for attendees who are exiting one gathering to avoid contact with those arriving for the next gathering. There must also be sufficient time for cleaning and disinfection between gatherings.
  - 3. For more guidance, please see [Physical Distancing for Businesses](#).

#### Enhanced Sanitation

- g) For guidance on cleaning, see: <https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/files/factsheet-covid-19-environmental-cleaning-NL.pdf>
- h) Provide Health Canada approved hand sanitizer (these typically contain at least 60 per cent alcohol) near the entrances and exits and throughout the place of worship in high traffic areas. Signage should be posted asking congregants to use sanitizer.
- i) Increase cleaning and disinfection of commonly contacted areas, including:
  - a. Seating;
  - b. Doorknobs;
  - c. Railings;
  - d. Light switches;
  - e. Elevator buttons; and
  - f. Ceremonial objects.
- j) Washrooms should be open, but increased cleaning and disinfection must take place. Ensure washrooms are always supplied with liquid soap and paper towels, and that warm running water is available. Contactless garbage bins should be available and emptied frequently.

#### Higher Risk Activities

- k) Handshaking, hugging, touching or passing objects between people, or other forms of physical contact are not permitted.
- l) Passing collection plates is not permitted. Alternatives can be considered, such as online donations or a depository to accept offerings.
- m) Faith-based rituals requiring physical contact between people should be changed to maintain physical distancing; if this is not possible, increase hand hygiene and wear a [non-medical mask](#).
  - Common use items should not be used, such as books and hymnals. Projecting materials or distribution of single-use materials can be considered, and congregants are encouraged to bring their own items. Discard of printed materials after the service is complete.
- n) If touching of ceremonial objects is required, individuals should perform hand hygiene before and after touching the object. They should not kiss, embrace, or press their faces on any shared ceremonial objects.
  - a.) Microphones must not be shared. Limit the number of people providing readings or other activities that need a microphone.

- o) Serving food and beverages is not recommended, but if it must be provided as part of a faith-based ritual (e.g. communion), the following precautions must be taken:
  - a. Serve food or drink in pre-packaged or individual portions.
  - b. Have a small number of designated individuals serve the food or drink.
  - c. Servers and recipients must not have physical contact.
  - d. Servers should wear a non-medical mask, and wash or sanitize their hands immediately before and after serving. Recipients are also recommended to wash or sanitize their hands before and after consuming food or drink.
- b.) Singing and playing wind/brass instruments is not recommended, due to increased risk of spread of virus with these activities. If such activities must occur they should be performed by as few people as possible who are positioned at least 12 feet from each other and other staff or volunteers. There must be no sharing of instruments or microphones. Choirs are not permitted.
- c.) Congregational singing is discouraged. Participants can hum, where appropriate.
- d.) Offering infant and child minding is not permitted at this time. Children should stay with their families for the duration of the service.

#### Personal Practices

- a) You should complete the [COVID-19 self-assessment](#) before visiting a place of worship.
- b) You should stay home if you are sick.
- c) If you are over 60 or have an underlying medical condition, you should consider delaying your return to your place of worship. Continue to participate in services online if possible.
- d) If you have arrived in Newfoundland and Labrador from outside the province within the last 14 days, you need to self-isolate and are not permitted to visit the place of worship.
- e) Wash or sanitize your hands often.
- f) Practice cough and sneeze etiquette, and avoid touching your face.
- g) You can wear a non-medical mask, but this is not required if you maintain physical distancing from others who are not in your bubble.