



May 2021 COVID GUIDANCE RECAP

This document is a compilation of the guidance from the COVID Guidance Newsletters. Each item is dated to make clear when the guidance was issued.

Updates from the Governor (May 2021)

The Governor recently made several updates that may impact parishes.

- **State Re-opening Plans**
Today the Governor announced a two-week pause to the state's reopening plan because the case count has plateaued. This means that all counties will remain in their current phase.
- **New Guidance for Religious Organizations**
This new guidance proposes the increase of capacity within churches through the creation of vaccinated-only sections where people would not need to observe physical distancing requirement. Our team recommends that we do not proceed with this option at this time. For now, please follow current capacity guidance per Phase and maintain 6 feet of social distancing between all parties.

Updated COVID plans (May 2021)

Thank you to all the COVID Safety Officer and parish leaders who have been submitting COVID Safety Plans. Now that we have been operating under the COVID guidance for more than year, we will be shifting the vetting team. We will no longer require detailed plans for every new activity. Instead, we will be a resource to help guide parishes through unique circumstances and to answer your questions. Just reach out to SeattleMass2020@seattlearch.org.

Singing (May 2021)

Singing requires people to project their voice, which increases the distance the virus may spread. Due to this, the Archdiocese of Seattle does not recommend congregational singing. This past week, we received two reports of parish choirs who had an individual test positive for the virus. In one case, it appears the virus was spread to others in the choir, marking the first transmission of the virus during a Mass in the Archdiocese of Seattle.

We ask that all choirs diligently follow the singing guidance. Every member should be screened, follow the 9-12 foot distancing guidance and wear a three layer surgical mask (except in the case of a soloists who are 30 feet from others).

Rolling Back to Phase 2 (April 2021)

Governor Inslee moved three counties back to Phase 2: Cowlitz, Pierce and Whitman County. Parishes located in these counties will need to follow the Phase 2 guidance for worship services, which requires a 25% maximum capacity for Mass, but not limited to 200 people. Also important to note is that if your parish has overflow space, it is no longer necessary to require that space to have its own restroom access. One set of restrooms is adequate to serve the church and other overflow space, provided 6 feet of distancing is maintained between each person. These counties will be reviewed again on May 3, 2021. You can read the latest guidance [here](#).

From an archdiocesan perspective, this means you should follow your Phase 2 plans that were submitted for review. If you have any questions please reach out to SeattleMass2020@seattlearch.org.

Events (April 2021)

The Governor's Office has updated its "events" guidance as part of its "Wedding, Funerals and Events COVID-19 Requirements" document [here](#):

Based on this information, it is possible to host events including receptions and events that include food, but everyone must follow the eating and drinking requirements, [here](#):

Phase 2

- Indoor: Maximum capacity of 200 or 25% capacity (not including vendors), whichever is less, so long as six feet of physical distancing is maintained between groups.
- Outdoor: Groups of 15, limit 2 households per group. Maximum capacity of 200, so long as six feet of physical distancing is maintained between groups.

Phase 3

- Indoor: Maximum capacity of 400 or 50% capacity (not including vendors), whichever is less, so long as six feet of physical distancing is maintained between groups.
- Outdoor: Groups of 15. Maximum capacity of 400, so long as six feet of physical distancing is maintained between groups.

For all these events, face coverings, 6 feet of distancing, as well as COVID Safety Officers are required. For indoor events, there must also be good ventilation and doors and windows should remain open. Hand sanitizer must be available for everyone upon entry to the event. If you have any questions, please reach out to SeattleMass2020@seattlearch.org.

Singing and Music Reminders (April 2021)

Live music and performances are permitted so long as **individuals screen for symptoms, wear face coverings and adhere to 9-12 foot physical distancing requirements.**

- Specifically, choirs with up to 15 singers are permitted to sing indoors during the service so long as each singer maintains 9 feet (12 feet is encouraged) of physical distancing and wears a **three-layer surgical** mask.
- Soloist singers are permitted to sing during the service without a mask provided that the individual maintains 15 feet of physical distancing.
- At this time in the Archdiocese of Seattle, congregational singing is NOT encouraged, for everyone's safety.

Cleaning

The widespread wearing of masks reduces contamination to surfaces. This means cleaning of highly touched surfaces needs to take place only once each day, even on days with multiple groups using the same spaces like Sunday Mass. We encourage COVID supervisors and volunteers to monitor activity during events and do spot cleaning on surfaces as needed.

Vaccine Updates

Thank you to all the parishes and schools that have hosted vaccine pop-up clinics across the archdiocese. To date more than 15 have provided vaccines to their local communities. We are partnering with Catholic Community Services on this effort. If you have been contacted by other agencies to host a pop-up clinic, please let us know at SeattleMass2020@seattlearch.org. Additionally, here are a few vaccine resources, should you receive questions:

- [COVID-19 Vaccine FAQs from the WA State Department of Health](#)
- Vaccine Finders:
 - [WA COVID Vaccine Finder](#)
 - [How to Get the COVID-19 Vaccine](#)
- [Archdiocese of Seattle Statement on COVID-19 Vaccines](#)

New Phase 3 Guidance (March 2021)

Earlier this week, Washington state entered Phase 3 of the Recovery Plan. Yesterday, Gov. Inslee released his official updated guidance for religious and faith-based organizations. You can read the [full document here](#).

This update allows:

- Up to 50% of room (or building) capacity, with a recommended maximum of 400 people if the space is less than 100,000 square feet and 600 people if the space is more than 100,000 square feet, so long as 6 feet of physical distancing can be achieved between each group in all directions.
- Choirs of any size to sing, so long as 6 feet of physical distancing is maintained between each singer and all singers wear a three-layer cloth mask or surgical mask.
- Weddings and funerals must follow [this specific guidance](#), which upholds the guidance in Phase 2.

Based on the governor's guidance, in the Archdiocese of Seattle, we recommend the following:

- While we strongly encourage parishes to continue enforcing the 6 feet of distancing, parishes may follow the governor's guidance and allow up to 15 individuals to self-select to sit together. Please note, this will create the potential for "close contact," which is defined as 15 minutes within 6 feet of an infected person and thus requires contact tracing and quarantine measures for those individuals. Therefore, other control and mitigation measures are crucial for us to keep our parishioners safe. Please emphasize with your staff and parishioners:
 - pre-screening, including temperature taking and staying home if you are sick
 - mask wearing
 - ventilation of fresh air into the worship space

- limiting time together in the same space and within 6 feet, especially face to face
- While the governor recommends keeping a log of attendees for contact tracing, we do not recommend that parishes use a registration system unless it is absolutely necessary for crowd control (see below). If exposure occurs, we ask that you continue to follow the current protocol of notifying the county public health department, notifying the archdiocese, and sending a HIPAA-compliant general message to the parish to inform them of a possible exposure.
- While the governor's guidelines permit "brief physical contact among a limited number of people (up to 15 individuals)," in the Archdiocese of Seattle, this pertains to interactions between altar servers and the celebrant. This does not allow for the "Kiss of Peace" or holding hands during the "Our Father."
- While choirs are allowed, congregational singing is not permitted. Chanting and a cappella responses may be permitted, but given the increase in capacity and proximity of non-household individuals, this is not the time to risk increased airborne viral load through singing.
- Please remind everyone that the goal of getting more people to Mass is to allow for more people to encounter Jesus in the Eucharist. We must continue to make sacrifices for the sake of one another, and try not to let our desire for social interactions or other elements of the Mass we miss cause us to let our guard down or distract us from the real purpose of Mass.

How to Update Your Capacity (March 2021)

With the new guidance, we are removing the requirement to seat people in every other row. Instead, we encourage parishes to be creative in safely seating people 6 feet apart. This may include a system of spacing diagonally or adding folding chairs to unused areas of the church, or creating designated overflow areas with a video screen so more parishioners can participate in Mass.

Based on the new guidance, we recommend each parish determine their total capacity at 50% and then determine the new capacity number with 6 feet of distancing. Once this is determined, look for creative ways to safely reach this new 50% capacity number.

Finally, rather than trying to police groups who want to sit together, encourage ushers to focus on helping individuals or families who prefer the 6 feet spacing to locate and maintain that throughout Mass.

Please update your reopening plan with your new capacity number and any other changes you'd like to make for Phase 3 and send it into SeattleMass2020@seattlearch.org.

Registration (March 2021)

Please note that registration is not required. We believe the registration system is an obstacle for people who would join in-person Mass otherwise. If your parish regularly hits its occupancy levels, then please continue to use the system to help with crowd control. However, if your parish has less than 80% occupancy on a regular basis, we recommend

that you remove the registration system and prepare for potential overflow.

Handouts, Bulletins, and Worship Aids (March 2021)

Please continue the practice that once a person is handed an item, they take the item home. Some parishes have provided “personal” copies of worship aids that can be taken to and from the parish.

Updated Homebound Guidance (March 2021)

Given the new provisions for those who have been vaccinated, the homebound guidance has been updated. Please review the latest guidance and sample visit script [here](#).

Clarification for Schools (March 2021)

Some of you heard that the CDC is allowing schools to reduce social distancing to 3 feet. Please note this is a special exception to the rule and is only relevant in the classroom for the placement of desks. In all other situations, students and staff will maintain 6 feet of distancing. This rule has not yet been approved for the state of Washington.

Travel Guidance (March 2021)

With spring break coming up, we have had several questions about travel and quarantining. We recommend that everyone follow the [current CDC travel guidelines](#).

The CDC recommends that any traveler get tested three to five days after a trip and stay home in self-quarantine for a full seven days after travel, even if the test is negative. If a traveler is not tested, the individual should stay home and self-quarantine for 10 days after travel.

Please note that the new travel guidelines require all people, including U.S. citizens, to test negative before they can return to the country.

Archdiocese of Seattle Statement on COVID-19 Vaccines

In accordance with the instruction of the Holy See and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the use of all current COVID-19 vaccines during this pandemic is morally acceptable. It is not only important for one's personal health, but it is also our responsibility to care for the common good of the broader community, and getting a vaccine is one way to do so. Whenever you are allowed to get the vaccine, please do so knowing that it is morally acceptable to receive whichever vaccine is being offered.

Vatican Resources (March 2021)

The Holy See recently published a resource kit to assist you with COVID-19 vaccine communication. The kit includes materials about the COVID-19 vaccine for varied audiences, relevant quotes from Pope Francis and episcopal conferences, links to useful information, and short messages for websites, parish bulletins, or other media. [Please see the toolkit here.](#)

Vaccination Update (March 2021)

We have been working closely with partners including CCS, the city of Seattle, Emergency Management and more to bring vaccination clinics to our parish and school sites. So far, nearly a dozen parishes and schools have held vaccine clinics. While the rollouts of these were very slow, we are starting to see a slight uptick in vaccine availability and a desire from partners to begin scheduling more clinics. If your parish is approached to be a vaccine clinic site, please let us know by emailing SeattleMass2020@seattlarch.org.

Updated Liturgy Q&A (March 2021)

As the pandemic continues to unfold, the guidance on public worship, both from the state of Washington and from the Archdiocese of Seattle, has changed with our growing understanding about how COVID-19 is spread. [This document](#) is intended to provide an overview of current guidance and quick answers to the most frequently asked questions from parishes about celebrating the liturgy during the pandemic.

Phase Changes (February 2021)

On Monday, the Puget Sound and the West regions moved into Phase 2 of the “Roadmap to Recovery,” which can be found [here](#).

Parishes in these regions are now able to do the following:

- Weddings and funerals are no longer capped at 30 people in Phase 2. Instead, parishes must follow the “appropriate venue requirements,” which remain at maximum 25% capacity of the building. Receptions are still discouraged.
- Two households may sit together indoors and outdoors at Mass.

Homebound Ministry Update (February 2021)

Given all the changes to the phases, we have updated the homebound ministry guidance. Please review the guidance [here](#).

New Variant (February 2021)

As many of you may be aware, there is a more robust and contagious variant of the coronavirus known as B.1.1.7. Recent reports indicate that it has come to our region. At this time, we must give renewed encouragement to everyone to strictly uphold all mitigation standards of mask wearing, hand hygiene, reduced time together, fresh air exchange and physical distancing -- especially distancing among parishioners and ministers in the sanctuary. We want to uphold our safety protocols to limit spread, help our parishioners feel safe coming to mass and to care for the common good.

New Religious Guidance from the State (February 2021)

Earlier this month Governor Inslee issued updated guidance, which has some implications

for religious celebrations. Please see the [full new guidance here](#).

Live music and performances are permitted so long as individuals wear face coverings and adhere to physical distancing requirements.

- Specifically, choirs with up to 15 singers are permitted to sing indoors during the service so long as each singer maintains 9 feet (12 feet is encouraged) of physical distancing and wears a three-layer surgical mask.
- Soloist singers are permitted to sing during the service without a mask provided that the individual maintains 15 feet of physical distancing.
- The performance of woodwind and brass instruments is permitted during the service so long as the performer(s) maintain 9 feet (12 feet is encouraged) of physical distancing and use bell covers. Woodwind and brass performers are permitted to remove their masks during their performance.
- At this time in the Archdiocese of Seattle, congregational singing is NOT encouraged, for everyone's safety.

Face coverings are required to be worn by all during the service; only one speaker at a time may remove their face covering. If a speaker decides not to wear a face covering, it is recommended that a Plexiglas 3-sided barrier is used during the service. The barrier must be disinfected after every use.

Up to two households are permitted to sit as group in Phase 1 outdoor services and Phase 2 indoor and outdoor services.

Indoor services at a place of worship may be held with up to 25% of room (or building) capacity, with a recommended maximum of 200 people, whichever is less, so as long 6 feet of physical distancing can be achieved between households in all directions. Face coverings are required for all participants.

Be sure to send your updated plans for Mass, ministry and offices

to seattlemass2020@seattlearch.org. You may find help with these updated checklists:

- [Mass](#)
- [Ministry](#)
- [Offices](#)

Volunteers at Mass (January 2021)

In the early days of the pandemic, we issued guidance asking for a 1:25 volunteer to Mass attendee ratio. Now that we have a better understanding of the virus and have pressure tested all of our safety measures, we no longer require this ratio. Instead, each Mass and each event at a parish must have a COVID-10 Safety Officer present.

Travel Quarantine Update (January 2021)

Guidance around quarantining after travel has changed. Please note that it is no longer required to stay home for 14 days after a trip. The recommendation is now seven days without any symptoms, and this is up to the individual's discretion. We recommend self-quarantining only if the person has had close contact with others. (Close contact is 15 minutes within 6 feet of someone outside the household.)

Governor Inslee's "Healthy Washington - Roadmap to Recovery" (January 2021)

This week Governor Inslee issued a new plan that will begin on January 11 once the current "Stay Home, Stay Healthy" order expires. This [article](#) outlines the details of the new plan. Key points include:

- The state will now be taking a regional approach instead of a county-by-county approach to evaluate coronavirus cases and health care services. For our purposes, please continue with the current protocol when you learn of an exposure of 1) gathering as much data as you can, 2) reporting to your county public health department, and 3) contacting the archdiocese.
- This new plan outlines two phases and uses a new mix of four metrics to determine if a region is eligible to progress from Phase 1 to Phase 2. These metrics are: COVID-19 cases, hospital admissions, ICU occupancy and COVID-19 positivity rate.
- In both phases, worship services have an indoor maximum of 25% capacity. (For some of our larger church buildings, this means we can welcome back more than 200 people, which was the previous limit.)
- Phase 1: Weddings and funerals are limited to no more than 30 people. Indoor receptions or gatherings are prohibited.
- Phase 2: Indoor receptions are allowed and must follow the appropriate venue requirements of no more than 25% capacity.
- Working from home is still strongly encouraged. However, parish offices may reopen at 25% capacity.

Lastly, given your exceptional safety record, contact tracing has not been an issue for our parishes, so we recommend relaxing registration for Mass. We encourage you to continue to share the good news that Mass is safe and make it as easy as possible for people to be welcomed back. You may consider things like overflow spaces in halls or other ways to creatively accommodate walk-up attendees to Mass. As long as we are keeping in mind the principles of control (pre-screening, hand washing and preparing of pews) and mitigation (wearing masks, physical distancing and reduction of time together), we should be confident about worshipping together.

New coronavirus and vaccines (January 2021)

As you may have heard, there is a new strain of the coronavirus, which British officials estimate to be 50-70% more contagious than the original strain. This is clearly cause for concern as this new variant has recently entered the United States. It appears that these strains will be mitigated by continuing to implement our current guidance to:

- Wear masks
- Watch distance
- Wash hands

Everyone will be required to keep these standards, even those who may be vaccinated over the next few months. Please note that vaccinated people must continue to maintain

the existing COVID-19 protocols.

COVID exposure confusion (January 2021)

There has been confusion regarding what to do when we learn of a positive COVID-19 exposure on our campus. Here is an [article from the CDC](#) about quarantine, isolation days and testing.

Please note that after testing positive for the coronavirus, a person does NOT need to get a negative test before returning to work or coming to the parish again. People may continue to test positive for COVID-19 for three months after initial recovery without being contagious to others.

The CDC indicates that a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 and has had symptoms may be with others after:

- At least 10 days since symptoms first appeared and
- At least 24 hours with no fever without fever-reducing medication and
- Other symptoms of COVID-19 are improving.

People who have tested positive but have not had symptoms may be with others 10 days after their positive test.

Thank you! (December 2020)

We would like to start by thanking everyone for all the hard work and tremendous care that went into ensuring our parishes and schools are as safe as possible. This diligence has proven quite successful. To date, we have celebrated almost 30,000 Masses and have had ZERO cases of virus transmission during Mass. This alone demonstrates how your safety protocols are working and serves as a good reminder of why we need to ensure we are always following them. This is even more important during the upcoming Christmas Masses, when we expect more people returning to in-person Mass for the first time, and therefore learning of the protocols for the first time.

Mass Reminders (December 2020)

While we expect to have more people attend Mass via livestream, here is a quick reminder of the latest in-person Mass guidance.

- We encourage COVID Safety Supervisors to review all safety guidelines with ministers and volunteers to ensure safe Masses. Please also ensure that you have the most updated screening questions to use for registration. Those who do not pass the screen are encouraged to attend Mass via livestream. Here is the link to the most recent [Mass Control/Mitigation/Exposure Checklist](#).
- We encourage an increase of ventilation, while also decreasing the overall length of the Mass. This includes selecting shorter readings, prayers, and song verses. Washington State Department of Health issued a helpful resource "[Ventilation and Air Quality for Reducing Transmission of COVID-19](#)". Please contact the Property & Construction team if you need assistance with air quality and ventilation in a

building.

- When everyone maintains physical distancing and wears a mask while on parish property, cleaning of surfaces does not need to be as rigorous and is only required once daily and more often as needed for frequently touched surfaces.
- Ushers should place people in the pew at safe distances and help with crowd control during Communion and while parishioners exit the building.
- All ministers should wear a mask. Presiders, deacons and lectors are encouraged to hold their mask when reading from the ambo instead of placing it on the commonly touched surface. Removing a mask is best done with the straps instead of on the front of the mask. A sanitization station is recommended at the ambo for readers.
- No congregational singing. Only one instrumentalist and one vocalist may perform at a time. All cantors must wear a mask at all times.
- While passed baskets are not allowed, parishes may use long-handled collection baskets, which minimizes touching of common surfaces. Additionally, during the Livestream portion of the Mass, we encourage the digital usher to ask viewers to make an online donation via the parish's website.

Parishioner who tests positive? (December 2020)

With the rising numbers of coronavirus cases throughout the state, we are undoubtedly experiencing more instances of people who attended Mass that later test positive. Our solid protocols and safety practices are designed to minimize any "close contact." This is very important information to share with Public Health when you call to report a positive case. Just because a person who tests positive for COVID attended a Mass, does not necessarily mean you need to close the parish. When you learn of a positive case, we recommend you thank the person for letting you know, ensure their privacy, gather as much data as possible, call or email your local County Public Health to report the case and share the protocols that we have in place. Then contact Nick Schoen or Ed Foster, so we can help you communicate appropriately to the parish. In the majority of cases, contact tracing is not needed and Masses may continue.

Charitable Outreach (December 2020)

We encourage creative ways to reach the homebound and marginalized during this time. Do not underestimate the power that you and your parishioners have to make a difference through the ministry of the Lord Jesus' presence through phone calls or homebound visits according to the protocol [here](#).

Homeless Shelters (December 2020)

As winter approaches, you may be considering reopening your parish shelter. Please work directly with your local Catholic Community Services contact to determine if this is a possibility. CCS is keeping a pulse on the latest safety standards and requirements for shelter environments. Please note that in many cases, CCS will not recommend a shelter, but will instead direct people to other programs that are housing guests in local hotels. If after consultation with CCS, you do wish to move forward with reopening a shelter, please

contact Property and Construction to review safety procedures.

Vaccines (December 2020)

This week the COVID-19 vaccine has made headlines worldwide. The coronavirus taskforce will be tracking this topic and sharing updates with you. Catholics are encouraged to receive the vaccination when it is available to protect the common good and the vulnerable among us.

This week the Bishops of Washington through the Washington State Catholic Conference issued a [statement](#). Additionally, the USCCB issued a [statement](#) about the morality of this vaccine stating, "Given the urgency of this crisis, the lack of available alternative vaccines, and the fact that the connection between an abortion that occurred decades ago and receiving a vaccine produced today is remote, inoculation with the new COVID-19 vaccines in these circumstances can be morally justified."

Four Components of Safety (November 2020)

1. Masks

Please remember the importance of wearing masks for protecting the vulnerable in our communities and for the common good. Please be sure to clearly post the posters regarding facial coverings and have a supply of face masks for people who come without one.

2. Cleaning

The widespread wearing of masks reduces contamination to surfaces and we are not recommending that thorough cleaning of spaces be done more than once daily. However, we would encourage COVID supervisors and volunteers to monitor activity during events and do spot cleaning on surfaces as needed.

Presiders, deacons and lectors are encouraged to hold their mask when reading from the ambo instead of placing it on the commonly touched surface. Removing a mask is best done with the straps instead of on the front of the mask. Hand hygiene with sanitizer should be used at the earliest convenience of the reader/speaker after the touching microphone, ambo surface, front of mask, own mouth or nose.

3. Time

During the winter, we should exercise every possible option to reduce the amount of time people are inside the church for in-person worship. A standard goal should be 45 minutes for Sunday Mass which requires slight changes such as shortening homilies to 3-5 minutes, selecting shorter options for various prayers and only singing the first verse of any song.

4. Ventilation

The Washington State Department of Health has updated its [building ventilation guidance](#), which addresses the latest information around the airborne transmission of the coronavirus from the CDC and public health. As we enter into colder months, keeping indoor air warm, while maximizing fresh outside air, will be challenging. Please read the

new Ventilation Guidance from the Archdiocese of Seattle [here](#).

Penance Services and Confession (November 2020)

During Advent, and in this time of pandemic, we especially want to offer people the opportunity to experience the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Providing this sacrament is an important and essential way in which we minister the healing and merciful love of God. Even though we are in a heightened health alert state, the conditions do not yet exist for general absolution, which is reserved for urgent and life-threatening situations in which individual confession is impossible. Regarding penance services, here are some considerations:

- Keep services under one hour.
- Given the spacing requirements, play soft music in the sanctuary to block out noise and maximize privacy.
- Consider the best worship spaces in each deanery and repeat them there, as opposed to having each parish host one.

Likewise, we will continue to offer the Sacrament of Reconciliation. To help minimize the risk of exposure, we recommend considering the following actions should anyone be concerned about possible transmission of the coronavirus:

- Temporarily move out of the confessional if it is in a tight space and provide the Sacrament of Reconciliation in a larger room where a confidential conversation can still be held.
- If possible, we recommend using a screen to block the air flow between the priest and penitent. The penitent should always have the option of confessing their sins anonymously.
- Ensure at least 6 feet of space between the priest and penitent, with facial coverings required at all times for both.
- We advise using a chair without armrests or cleansing the armrests with a sanitizer between each person. You may also consider providing this sacrament in such a way that the penitent remains standing so to ensure proper distance while minimizing the surfaces that are touched.

Homebound (November 2020)

Jesus calls us to be as present as possible to people in these circumstances at this time lest they feel abandoned or isolated in a moment of need. They must know the love of God through us. Let us remember the very clear words of Jesus when he taught us the Corporal Works of Mercy:

“I was naked, and you clothed me. I was sick, and you took care of me. I was in prison, and you visited me.” Matthew 25:26

Homebound visits may now occur at the discretion of each parish’s pastoral leader. Given the current surge in virus cases, we recommend limiting the visit to no more than 10 minutes and visiting no more than 5 people in a given week. [Please read the detailed](#)

[guidance on homebound ministry here.](#)

Letter from the governor (November 2020)

This past weekend, our Bishops and other religious leaders received a letter from Governor Jay Inslee, who appreciates your support in protecting the common good. He writes, "For many in our state, worship is an essential part of life and community and has helped individuals cope with the trauma and stress that COVID has created." This acknowledgement that worship is essential is a great win for us and this recognition is due to all the great work that our parishes and safety staff have put forth. Thank you! Please see the full letter [here](#). Additionally, read the most recent guidance for religious services [here](#).

Long-handled collection baskets (November 2020)

While passed baskets are not allowed, we will now allow parishes to use long-handled collection baskets. The long handle minimizes any touching of common surfaces. Additionally, since the usher (wearing a facial covering of course) is near a person in the pew only briefly, this action does not put anyone in "close contact" with each other.

Adoration (November 2020)

The new guidance from the Governor does not close our Churches. Therefore, we may continue leaving the church open for prayer and for adoration. Please ensure there is proper signage so people wear masks and stay physically distanced. Also, please be sure to wipe down high touch contact surfaces at least once per day.

Overnight Shelters (November 2020)

This year presents extra challenges for shelters. Safely housing guests during this pandemic requires many extra precautions. For any parish interested in starting up their winter shelter, we recommend first contacting Catholic Community Services for guidance before submitting a plan to the Archdiocese of Seattle at SeattleMass2020@seattlearch.org.

Mental Health Awareness (November 2020)

The on-going pandemic and the corresponding exhaustion and emotional fatigue that we are feeling continues, combined with seasonal changes and more difficulty connecting with the people and supports that typically help us cope. Young people may be even more at risk due to less access to their typical social networks. Please read this [Health Advisory](#), which provides recommendations and resources.

Cleaning (November 2020)

You will no longer be required to wipe down the entire pew between each Mass. It will be important to focus cleaning efforts on high-touch areas such as the tops of the pew and door handles between each Mass. Additionally, while the church is open during the day,

we recommend a once daily wipe down. This change is due to widespread use of masks, which reduce the contamination of surfaces as well as the new science and information, which highlights that the virus is primarily transmitted through the air and not through contact surfaces.

Kaufer's Update on Wine (November 2020)

To extend the life of your wine in opened bottles, Kaufer's recommends transferring wine from opened jugs into 750ml bottles and using the stopper device on those. They recommend a [simple stopper](#) or the [Vacuum stopper](#).

NOVEMBER 2020

Below please read new items as well as updates to previous COVID guidance. All [special COVID Newsletters](#) are in the Chancery to Parish archive on the Archdiocese of Seattle website. Additionally, all [COVID resources](#) are on the home page of the Archdiocese website under "Parish Resources" in the "Coronavirus Updates & Info" box on the far right bottom of the page.

Universal facial covering is required ([NEW poster](#))

In an effort to maintain current safety standards for public spaces in our community all Mass participants must wear a facial covering. If an individual cannot wear a facial covering, they must wear a plastic face shield as a minimum standard. Please keep in mind that simple surgical masks or double sided cloth masks are the preference. After reviewing the data and feedback from pastors, we made this change to uphold our commitment to the common good and to reflect the realities in other public settings, which require people to wear facial coverings. Thank you for understanding this necessary safety and health precaution.

The new requirement is even more important with the upcoming winter. Masks are proven to prevent the spread of the coronavirus and will also provide additional protections from other illnesses like the common flu, which starts to spread in the winter. To accommodate the cold weather, we will be changing the ventilation and cleaning requirements, which are only possible with this new mask requirement.

Ventilation changes (November 2020)

We do not want to freeze our parishioners this winter! After consultation with other dioceses, medical experts and the Thomastic Institute, we will be making changes to the ventilation requirements. These changes hinge on the enforcement of mask wearing.

Please note that fresh air is always optimal. However, during the winter months we recognize it may not be feasible to get fresh air by keeping all the windows and doors open. Please know that you may close these for the winter, as long as you take additional safety measures:

As you decrease fresh air intake, you must require that everyone wear a mask, you must enforce physical distancing and you must shorten the amount of time in the space. Examples of this include using shorter forms of prayers, singing only the first verse of a song, selecting shorter forms of readings and keeping the homily to no more than 5 minutes.

Contact surfaces (November 2020)

We now have more data around how the coronavirus spreads. Experts indicate that the virus primarily spreads through the air and not through contact surfaces. Due to this, we can change our robust cleaning requirements. Moving forward, it will be important to focus cleaning efforts on high-touch areas such as the tops of the pew and door handles. You will no longer be required to wipe down the entire pew between each Mass. If you have any questions, please contact Ed Foster.

Bring back the Caffeine! (November 2020)

Along with the changes to contact cleaning in the church, we are making changes to the requirements in the office setting. Parish offices may now bring back their kitchen appliances, as long as the following safety measures are in place:

- Everyone must wash their hands prior to using appliances (Coffee machine, water system, microwave, etc.).
- Please be sure not to congregate in the kitchen or break area.
- Please be sure to regularly wipe down the handles of these appliances.

Registration, Reservations and Attendance (November 2020)

We no longer have the requirement to keep registration logs for contact tracing purposes. If we need to reach out to the community regarding a potential exposure, we will reach out to the entire community. However, many parishes will continue to use the online reservation system to help with seating and spacing at Mass and to ensure parishes are not exceeding their capacity limits. Pastors can decide whether or not they wish to continue using their online reservation system.

Addendums aka "Tune Up Addendum"

Our parish plan vetting team is still busy reviewing addendums. Please note that you should provide an addendum for any changes to your operations. For example, if you are having on campus meetings or ministry events, we ask that you please submit an addendum. These are due each Wednesday by Noon for feedback by that weekend. You can submit [your addendums](mailto:SeattleMass2020@seattlearch.org) to SeattleMass2020@seattlearch.org.

A few things to note:

- You can have faith based parish events! The requirement is 25% room occupancy for these.
- While we ask that all events and uses of the campus be for parish purposes only, we have made an exception for Alcoholics Anonymous groups that will need to meet inside during the winter. They will be required to following our safety standards. Please contact the vetting team for more detailed information.
- If you have other non-parish groups who wish to use your space, please contact the vetting team first.

Music & Livestream Licensing (November 2020)

At this time, we still highly discourage congregational singing because there is significant evidence that singing increases the spread of the virus. For this reason, we recommend a single cantor, or a cantor and a musician as long as they are wearing masks or performing from behind a plastic barrier. Since our parishes are now livestreaming Mass, it is important to keep music licensing in mind. Every parish should purchase a universal music license from a company like One License or CCLI and post it in the Livestream at the

beginning of every Mass. This is a best practice. Alternatively, if you do not wish to purchase a music license, you may use religious music that is in the public domain. The list is fairly extensive and you can find it [here](#).

COVID Supervisor: You can have more than one (September 2020)

Each parish and school must have a COVID Supervisor on-site while parish or school activities occur. These COVID Supervisors must be in coordination with each other and play a key role in the development of the reopening plans and the subsequent addenda. To train additional COVID Supervisors, use this [Training Webinar link](#).

Addenda: When to send one in... (September 2020)

Thank you to all of you who have worked so hard to develop your reopening plans and addenda. These plans clearly outline the safety procedures and allow everyone to be on the same page with any changes or adjustments that take place overtime.

A parish reopening plan should include the procedures around the operations of the parish offices, the liturgy (both indoor and outdoor if applicable), and ministry activities including faith formation, youth ministry, food bank collection, etc.

As parishes add new activities or expand current activities into new locations, we ask that you fill out an addendum and submit it to SeattleMass2020@seattlearch.org for approval. This will ensure all our parishes are following the most recent guidance, which we recognize is changing quickly. If you have any questions, please contact Nick Schoen.

Faith Formation During COVID (September 2020)

The Faith Formation and Youth Ministry teams have developed guidance to ensure we can continue with our mission of teaching the faith while keeping everyone safe and healthy. Please review this letter, which provides guiding principles to support your efforts in reopening your programs safely. **English** | **Spanish**

In-person ministry (September 2020)

As a reminder, in-person ministry may NOT exceed 3 hours and may NOT include any food or drink. While in Phase 2, all in-person ministry must not exceed 25% of room capacity and in Phase 3, in-person ministry must not exceed 50% of room capacity. However, please note that if parish ministry meetings are taking place in a school building, then no more than 5 people may be in a classroom, followed by proper sanitization and cleaning.

Communion Reminders (September 2020)

During this time, it is temporarily the policy of the Archdiocese to ask the faithful, out of concern for others, to receive Communion in the hand only. During Communion, each Eucharistic minister must have a hand sanitizing station available should they make contact with someone's hand. Everyone wishing to receive must approach wearing a mask and may only remove the mask when they are ready to consume the Host. Once they've consumed the Host, they must put their mask on and return to their pew or exit the building if Communion is held at the end of the Mass.

Guidelines are Working (August 2020)

No outbreak linked to COVID-19 has happened at a Catholic church despite more than a million public Masses celebrated over the past four months across the U.S. Please read [this article](#), which highlights your great work here in the Archdiocese of Seattle. Thank you for your continued diligence to all the guidance.

Safety Officers (August 2020)

In addition to the Parish COVID-19 Safety Supervisor, each school has its own COVID-19 Safety Supervisor. These two key safety roles MUST work together to ensure all employees and volunteers complete the [employee safety training](#) and follow all the safety and cleaning protocols at all events taking place on the parish or school campus.

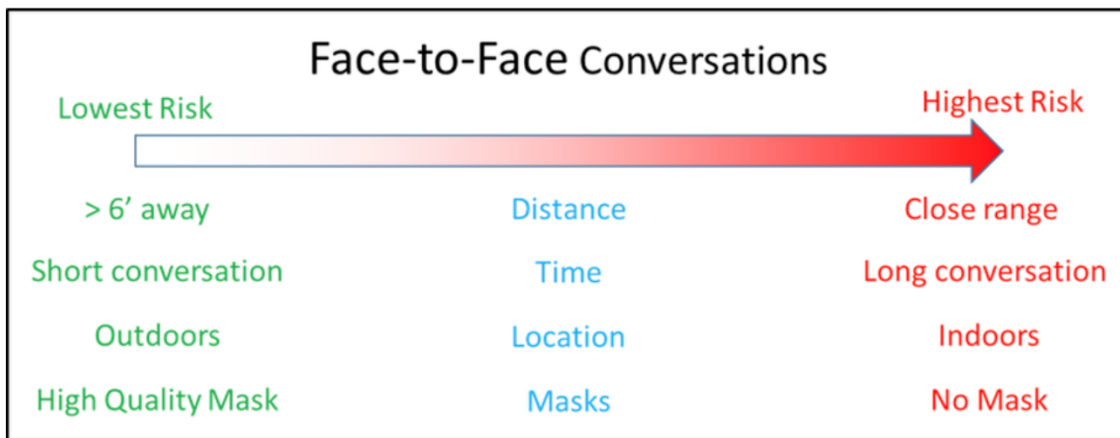
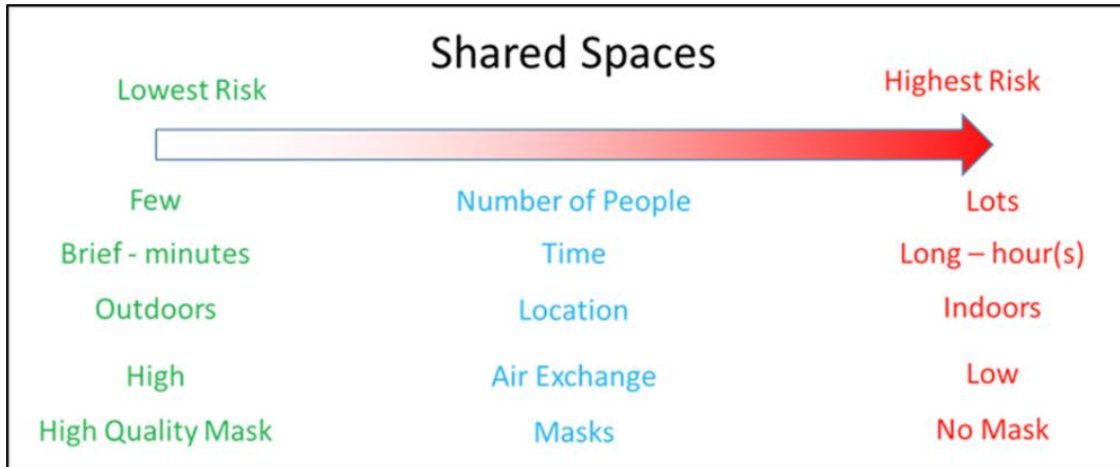
Missals and Hymnals (August 2020)

We have received several questions about purchasing new missals and hymnals for the new year.

Given the uncertainty around the pandemic, the desire to ensure our people are safe, the lack of singing during Mass and the desire to be good stewards of finances, we do not recommend purchasing new missals at this time.

Mask Guidance (July 2020)

New research indicates that the highly contagious coronavirus may be passed to people not just through surface contact and breath droplets but also through the air^[1]. Because of this, it is even more important that we are diligent about mask wearing. By wearing a mask, we are protecting each other.



At this time, all parishes should be using the *minimal* number of liturgical ministers possible to celebrate Mass. Every liturgical minister (including deacons) must wear a mask and observe physical distancing during the Mass. The only exceptions for wearing a mask are:

- For the priest celebrant
- When a lector or deacon is reading the Sacred Scriptures at which time, they must be 12 feet away from anyone else.

At the beginning of Mass, please announce the key changes that people will see during the mass, and also remind them that they should wear their face covering for the entirety of the Mass. If they do not have a mask when they arrive, please offer them one. If they refuse to wear one, please ask if they have a medical reason for not wearing one. (Please note you cannot ask WHAT the medical condition is.) If they do, please place them in a section where they have 10-12 feet of distance rather than 6 feet of distance. If they do not have a medical reason, ask them to consider attending Mass through livestream. If they insist on attending in person and not complying with the stated requirement or having a medical reason to do so, please place them at the back of the church with at least 10-12 feet of physical distancing. Please invite them to a conversation, perhaps with someone on the COVID-19 taskforce at a mutually agreed upon time later that week. **Each parish may want to limit the number of people who may attend Mass while refusing to wear a mask and when that limited quota is filled then no additional such persons may attend that

Mass.

If a substantial number of congregants are uncooperative with this requirement then permission to celebrate public Mass may be withdrawn from the parish in question. It may be advisable for parishioners to know that a safe and sanitary environment is necessary pre-condition for the public celebration of the Mass.

Confessions (adapted from “beyond COVID” doc) (July 2020)

In phase one, we recommended that confession not be publicized to avoid a gathering. However, with new guidelines around church capacity in phase two (25% or 200 whichever is less) and phase three (50% or 400 whichever is less) we can and should advertise the sacrament of confession. To help minimize the risk of exposure, we recommend considering the following actions, in addition to the [Thomistic Institute guidelines](#)

There are to be no logs or registration for confession to maintain the privacy of the penitent.

- Physical distancing is required. Please use clear signage and tape/markings on the ground for people to safely stand while waiting.
- Remove all books, brochures or items that a penitent may touch while waiting.
- Facial covering is required throughout the confession and highly recommended for the priest.
- Confessions should not be in a tight space. They should be in a larger room where confidential conversation can still be held.
- If possible, we recommend using a screen to block the airflow between priest and penitent.
- The penitent should always have the option of confessing their sins anonymously.
- Ensure at least 6 feet of space between the priest and penitent.
- We advise using a chair without armrests or cleansing the armrests with a sanitizer between each person.
- You may also consider providing this sacrament in such a way that the penitent remains standing to ensure proper distance while minimizing the surfaces that are touched.
- Provide ventilation and fresh air exchange into the space using fans and open windows if necessary.
- At the end of the confession time, conduct the same cleaning protocol as you would after Mass.

Anointing (July 2020)

Anointing should continue in all phases in consideration of the guidelines below and the [Thomistic Institute guidelines](#)

- In cases of hospital or facility calls, any priest can respond to these assuming the personal protective equipment is available to him. Please contact Joe Cotton for questions related to hospital and facility calls.
- In cases of a home or community call, proper intake of screening questions should be conducted over the phone, to be sure the person or anyone in their household is not exhibiting signs of COVID-19. If screening is passed, any priest can respond to anointing call.

- If the screening fails, or the person is known to have COVID-19, the dean or Nick Schoen should be contacted to locate a priest trained with and in possession of an “anointing kit”.

Archbishop Video (July 2020)

Please see a video from Archbishop Etienne [here](#).

At Home with Faith (July 2020)

We’ve developed a series of resources in English and Spanish for people to continue to grow their faith while at home. Please visit the [At Home with Faith webpage](#) to see the resources, which includes the newest materials to guide families through Holy Week. We encourage you to share this link and the resources with your parish!

Food Banks

Many of our parishes operate food banks or food services for people in our communities, which is deemed essential in the governor’s order. Therefore, we recommend that parishes continue this important part of our ministry. However, any parish worker or volunteer cannot be a vulnerable person. Each parish will need willing volunteers who are not vulnerable to keep food banks operational during this time. We recommend only pre-packed food for the community rather than a meal service.

Additionally, many parishes collect food during Sunday Mass. Now that Masses are suspended, please publicize a new time and location to drop off food donations. We have received word that St. Vincent de Paul’s food pantries are running low across the Archdiocese.

Archbishop’s Letter (March 2020)

[Here](#) is the Spanish version of Archbishop’s Letter to the People dated March 24, 2020.

Pastoral Care Calls (March 2020)

While we cannot gather physically, we recommend connecting with vulnerable parishioners via phone. [Here](#) is a recommended script for you or your team to use when making these calls, in Spanish [here](#).

Additionally, the Archdiocese Pastoral Care team is available to help parishes reach out to parishioners. We have a team of volunteers who speak various languages and can help make these calls. Please reach out to Erica Cohen if your team needs support Erica.Cohen@seattlearch.org.

We offer our sincere condolences to all families touched by the coronavirus epidemic as well as to those families whose funeral services have been interrupted as a result of this pandemic.

Pope Grants Plenary Indulgences (March 2020)

Today, Pope Francis issued a decree granting indulgences for people with COVID-19, for those who care for them, including medical staff and family members, and for those who pray for them. Read the decree from Pope Francis [here](#).

Check on Your Parishioners (March 2020)

We must stay present for our parishioners, even when we're physically distanced from them. Please be sure your parishioners know how to stay connected to you and each other. Here are some recommendations:

- Publicize when your church is open and when Masses will be live streamed.
- Make it clear who to contact if parishioners need support – prayers, food, a listening ear. Share the number on your website and via email newsletter.
- Consider creating a volunteer opportunity for people who wish to call individual parishioners to check on them. This is also a great opportunity to connect with all parishioners especially those who are inactive, fallen-away, or may have needs of which you currently unaware.

We have a crew of people ready to support you with pastoral calls. If you need help in reaching your parishioners, please reach out to Erica Cohen in Pastoral Care at ericac@seattlearch.org, 206-909-5330.

Preparing for Possible Temporary Closure (March 2020)

Today Governor Inslee announced several economic programs to help support the financial needs of families and small businesses. He also recommended people over the age of 60 shelter in place, which means they should not leave the house. Parishes should consider the possibility that this could expand to more people and we want our parishes to be prepared. Please take time to assess your critical administrative and ministerial functions. What processes are in place and what technology do you need to accomplish these tasks? Could your team handle them if everyone were to work remotely? If not, what would you need?

Food Programs (March 2020)

Many of our parishes offer food assistance programs and we recommend keeping these food programs up and running for the community. However, food should be pre-packaged and handed out to people rather than served in a group meal to ensure proper social distancing. Additionally, many of our food ministry volunteers are over age 60 and should not be putting themselves at risk by leaving the house. (Please note Governor Inslee's statements). This is a great opportunity to ask younger, healthy people to consider volunteering for this important ministry.

Additional Resources from the USCCB (March 2020)

The Resources list below has been updated to include additional materials just issued by the USCCB to help Catholics in the absence of Sunday Mass and to assist families so their extended time together can give growth to faith, love, and familiar harmony. Please check out this list to see what resources might help your parishioners access the graces being offered to them at this time.