



Stage 3 Guidelines Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana September 20, 2020

As we move through this unprecedented time, we are grateful for your continued attention to the safety and well-being of all in your care. In all decisions, we strive to strike a balance between maintaining the rhythm of your community of faith, while also ensuring the safest environment possible. While sometimes difficult, attention to these matters has meant that, so far, no congregation has had to shut down completely because of a COVID-19 outbreak. Exposure and infections have been managed with skill and attention.

Attached are the Phase 3 guidelines as outlined by the State of Louisiana. As of the date of this document, Orleans Parish remains in Phase 2. The state now allows 75% capacity as determined by the State Fire Marshall. However, capacity should not exceed a space's ability to maintain physical distance.

If in person worship services are offered, congregations should continue to hold virtual worship via live-streaming, broadcast, and recording. When possible during video worship, participants should model mask wearing for the viewers. Participants will maintain at least 6ft of distance, and much greater distance for those who are singing, as discussed below.

Contact tracing should continue.

Guidelines from the CDC state the risk of infection due to airborne particles. These particles can remain in the air for an unknown amount of time. Therefore, especially with singing, it is recommended that individuals not "pass through" an area that may be contaminated. Once again, whenever possible (even with distancing), mask use is strongly encouraged.

Any questions should be directed to the Bishop or the Canon to the Ordinary.

Holy Eucharist

Because of continued concerns related to the removal of masks and hand hygiene, we will maintain current Eucharistic and baptismal guidelines through Phase 3 or until modified by the Bishop.

*All congregants must wear masks

Exceptions: Again, although masking is preferred, soloists (up to 3) who are at least 25ft from the nearest person (on all sides) may remove a mask when singing. We are maintaining the guidance of no choirs and no congregational singing, even when masked. Preachers who are at least 10ft from the nearest person (on all sides) may remove a mask while preaching. The same is true of lay readers (10ft all sides). If this is not possible, masks must be worn. It is recommended that a congregation use one lay reader per service (if they are not masked while reading) to reduce contamination of the microphone. Everyone must put his/her mask back on after signing/preaching/reading.

Social distancing, contact tracing, sanitation and hand hygiene guidelines are still in effect as per our guidelines

*Celebrant is masked at all times except consumption of bread and wine.¹

Celebrant and all in the altar party practices thorough hand washing prior to the service. He/she will use hand sanitizer prior to preparation of elements that are already on the altar. Lavabo is acceptable but cannot be a replacement for proper hand sanitizing. Hand towels should not be shared.

Any acolytes or Eucharistic ministers will also practice the same hand cleaning/sanitizing rituals.

*Bread for celebrant on paten covered by burse, cloth or veil. Only the Celebrant will receive the wine.

*Trays of wafers are prepared ahead of the service. The priest/altar guild member must wash hands thoroughly, wear a mask and use fresh, clean, disposable gloves when this task is performed. Each wafer is placed in a small paper cup (think small medicine cups from the hospital). The entire tray is then covered in plastic wrap or a plastic tub (not cloth). These trays can be brought up during the preparation of the table.

*The Celebrant continues with the Eucharistic Prayer as normal.

¹ The Celebrant will only remove his/her mask and consume after the trays with wafers have been removed from the altar.

*After the conclusion of the Eucharistic Prayer, the trays are removed from the altar by EM, the priest or an acolyte and placed on a separate table, apart from the altar. We know that each congregation will have to work out the logistics of this movement. It is only once the trays have been removed that the Celebrant may remove his/her mask and consume the bread and the wine. Again, the celebrant is the only one who can receive from the priest's host and receive wine from the chalice.

*The plastic covering is removed from the trays. The ushers are then asked to invite members of the congregation up to remove a paper cup from the tray and take it back to their seat. Practice social distancing. Everyone is required to practice hand hygiene before removing a paper cup from the tray. Having music playing during this time is recommended.

*If distanced and masked, the celebrant can stand at 6ft from the tray, once it has been removed, and say, "The Body of Christ, the Bread of heaven" as members of the congregation pick up their paper cups. This may provide additional interaction as the bread is received.

*The priest directs congregants on proper disposal of the paper containers. They are not to be left in the pews. These are to be treated as reverently as a silver chalice. The church may choose to have a receptacle for these at the back of the church to receive these cups. They may be buried or burned at a later date.

*The priest and congregation practice hand hygiene.

*The service continues.

Music

Congregational singing is not allowed. Recorded singing is preferred. If there is live singing, only a small number of singers are allowed, and each singer must be positioned at least 25ft from other singers or participants. Preachers who are at least 10ft from other participants may remove their masks while preaching.

Bulletins and Contact Tracing

A congregation may use printed bulletins. They may be placed in the pews that are available for seating. Congregants are asked to take them at the conclusion of the service. Again, we want to avoid having volunteer staff collecting these after the service.

Also, to help with contact tracing and to avoid a “bottle neck” at the doors, congregations may use online reservations. They may also have a single card in the pew that individuals may use to fill out contact information. But, as always, virtual and online options are always recommended.

Baptisms

Because of the steps that are needed to do this safely, when possible, only have one baptism at a service. Make accommodations in your regular baptism schedule to plan for this. If not possible, these guidelines provide framework for multiple baptisms.

Water may be placed in the font for the Thanksgiving over the Water. However, this water will not be used for the baptism.

One cruet of water is available for each individual baptized.

The parent(s) will hold the child (if an infant or small child), not the celebrant.

All will wear masks during the entire service. Of course, the exception to this being the CDC recommendations of age guidelines for mask wearing.

The priest will not use a baptismal “shell” or his/her hand to baptize. Water will be poured directly from the cruet onto the head.

A clean cloth (one per individual) will be available. The parent will dry the head of the baptized. If an adult, they will dry their own head. These towels will not be shared.

A small dish with a single cotton ball with the chrism oil already placed on it will be available for each individual. After the baptism, the priest will sanitize his/her hands before placing the thumb in the oil on the cotton ball. The individual will be chrismated. Hand sanitizing will occur after each chrismation.

The water in the baptismal font will be properly disposed of after the service.

Hand hygiene will be performed after the baptism(s).

Confirmations

The bishop has resumed his visitation schedule. No more than two individuals may be confirmed at each worship service. Please contact the bishop ahead of his scheduled visitation to plan for confirmations.

Weddings

Like funerals, weddings should follow capacity and distancing guidelines as established by the state. All must be masked. If there is 10ft between the celebrant and the couple and the couple and the congregation, masks may be removed. Otherwise, all must be masked. This also applies to photographs taken in the worship space.

Funerals

Funerals should follow the same guidelines as worship services.

*A note about weddings and funerals: When presiding at a wedding venue or a funeral home, it is much more difficult to maintain protocols for distancing, masking and hand hygiene. Be sure to plan accordingly with family members, event planners and funeral directors.

Coffee Hour

As with Phase 1 and 2, there should be no shared food or beverages (buffets or common coffee urns). The greatest risk at coffee hour is that in order to consume food or beverages, masks are removed. Safe (preferably outdoor), masked and socially distanced gatherings are acceptable. Food prep should follow state mandates on screening, masking, cleanliness and hand hygiene. Any distribution should be done in separate, disposable containers.

Pastoral Care

Pastoral care should be conducted via telephone or online whenever possible. However, if conducted in-person, strict masking and distancing must be maintained for the safety of the individual. The clergy must adhere to the rules, regulations, and safety protocols of all health care facilities. Clergy who function in a hospital setting must abide by all hospital protocols. All clergy going to healthcare settings should closely monitor their health. If they develop typical COVID-19 symptoms, they should self-isolate and contact their medical professional for further instructions. If exposed to a known or suspected COVID-19 patient, clergy should also closely monitor their health and self-quarantine for 14 days.

Congregations should continue ministries of presence and compassion, with a strong focus on reaching out to those most vulnerable.