

May 11, 2020

Dear Friends in Christ,

“Are we there yet?”

Anyone who has travelled with children—or anyone who travelled as a child—knows that plaintive cry from the back seat. We are tired of the journey; we are tired of waiting. We are tired of the limits that sitting in a car imposes. We are ready to be there—wherever “there” may be.

The people of Israel felt that impatience on their 40-year journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. They got angry at each other, they missed the way things were, and they strayed. They also experienced the radical benevolence of God in sustaining them with unexpected heavenly food and guiding them, eventually, to their new home. A home that was different from the home they had left, but all the more precious for their time in the desert.

Our Arizona churches are still in the early stages of our journey with COVID-19. We are not “there” yet—and we are not going to be getting “there” any time soon. This journey is not going to be a matter of weeks, but months or years. We will experience—we are experiencing—the impatience and frustration of a child in a car or the people of Israel during the Exodus. We are also experiencing the radical benevolence of God in sustaining our communities through online worship, generous financial giving, and renewed pastoral bonds and connections. We are heading into a future that is uncertain except for the knowledge that it will be different from the way it was.

So, we are not “there” yet. But we are “here.” We are here in the present moment, in our present circumstances. And Jesus is here with us.

Our Task Force has followed the lead of the recommendations of the Center for Disease Control, American Enterprise Institute, Johns Hopkins University, Episcopal Relief and Development, and other experts to create the document “Gathering for Abundant Life: Arizona Church and Worship in the time of COVID-19.” This document will provide guidance for congregations in the Episcopal Diocese of Arizona to regather during Phase II for some in-person worship and ministry. It will also provide a roadmap and some markers for when we will be able to enter Phase III, which will enable larger gatherings and more face to face ministry.

This may not be a linear journey. ***A congregation—or the entire diocese—may enter Phase II, but discover that we need to return to Phase I due to a second wave outbreak of the virus, or a church member who tests positive for COVID-19.***

Some members of our congregations and clergy have health vulnerabilities such that they will not be able to participate in person during Phase II, so we urge the continuation of online offerings for both worship and formation. If the clergy in charge of a congregation are unable, due to health concerns, to lead worship during Phase II, please contact my office to receive support for your lay leaders offering Morning Prayer, or to find supply clergy who are available.

In our Diocese, I am tentatively offering May 31 as the first day that congregations may begin to enter Phase II and gather for in-person worship, pending:

- A move to Phase II for the State of Arizona by Governor Doug Ducey
- City and local officials' lifting of stay at home restrictions
- A sustained decrease in new COVID-19 cases, and availability of testing in your congregation's county.
- Compliance with the following guidelines
- Approval of your congregational plan for Phase II by me.

**It is likely that in-person worship will begin after that date in most of our congregations, and definitely true that in-person worship will not begin for most members of our congregations on that date.**

We will resist the temptation to pretend the world is the way we want it to be, rather than as it actually is. We will uphold the central command of Jesus to love our neighbors. We will learn and adapt as we journey forward.

This plan depends upon a high level of trust. We trust that people who are ill will stay home. We trust that those who attend worship will follow the guidelines. We trust that those who attend worship and are subsequently diagnosed with COVID-19 will immediately inform their clergy. We trust that God is here with us, in this present moment, and will continue to love us, guide us, and sustain us.

I am incredibly grateful for the work of the Task Force in preparing these guidelines.

Yours in Christ,

The Right Rev. Jennifer A. Reddall  
Sixth Episcopal Bishop of Arizona

# Gathering for Abundant Life: Arizona Church and Worship in the time of COVID-19

*“I came that they might have life, and have it abundantly.” (John 10:10)*

The work, ministry, and worship of our congregations in Arizona is continuing in new ways through the COVID-19 pandemic. Our congregations have not been able to gather face to face, but we have never closed or stopped being the Church. So we are not calling this a re-opening. We are setting out the guidelines for how we will gather in the world in which we find ourselves, and how we will gather safely, caring for the life of every member of our flock.

It is important to recognize that this is not a world that we have chosen to live in, or limitations that we take pleasure in imposing. We know that worship services elsewhere have been “superspreader” events that resulted in many deaths in the immediate worshipping community, and a spike in infections in the surrounding area, and commit ourselves to loving our neighbors by valuing their lives.

We grieve the loss of many core aspects of our worship and our community for the immediate future. We also continue to hope that those core aspects of worship and community which we are unable to do now will be restored to us eventually. Life may not feel abundant for a while. But God’s blessings will continue to abound, even when we don’t feel them.

The Task Force will continue to amend and develop this document as we live into it over the next months.

One important note to highlight: at any phase, if a church member or staff person who has been in the church building or with church members tests positive for COVID-19, the infected individual should notify the priest. The Priest, or staff, should notify everyone who was present in the worship service or event that someone at the gathering had COVID-19. They should be advised to contact their doctor. The Priest and staff should not identify the person who tested positive for COVID-19. The Church will immediately go back to Phase I for at least the next 14 days, and will need to do a substantive cleaning of any affected areas of the building at least 72 hours after the last contact. Some or all churches may also return to Phase I due to increased infection rates in your area or Arizona as a whole.

The Right Rev. Jennifer A. Reddall, Bishop  
The Rev. Gerardo Brambila, St. Mark’s, Mesa  
The Rev. Taylor Devine, St. Philips in the Hills,  
Tucson  
The Rev. Bruce Jackson, St. John’s, Glendale  
Dr. Gerry Kato, Trinity Cathedral, Phoenix  
Kym Kennedy, St. John’s, Bisbee

Clyde Kunz, St. Matthew’s, Tucson  
Dr. Richard Neff, Epiphany, Flagstaff  
The Rev. Erika von Haaren, St. Barnabas,  
Scottsdale

Staff Members:  
Canon Cathy Black

# Phase I

*We are currently in Phase I in the Diocese of Arizona.*

## **Phase I External Indicators**

- Increasing rates of COVID-19 Infection
- Overburdened medical resources
- State and local “Stay at Home” orders

## **Phase I Guidelines for Church Ministry**

- Offices may be open with very few staff
- Essential ministries (food banks, direct service, blood drives, 12 step meetings) may continue, with reduction of volunteers as you are able, all volunteers wearing masks, and thorough cleaning after activities.
- Christian Formation for all ages offered online

## **Phase I Guidelines for Worship**

- No in-person worship or meetings with more than 10 people present
- Online worship recommended
- Funerals, weddings, and ordinations of less than 10 people permitted, with masks and social distancing between participants.
- Emergency baptisms only

# Phase II

*In order for a congregation to move into Phase II, their Bishop's Committee or Vestry must prepare a plan for how they are going to enact the guidelines below in their congregation's context, submit it to Bishop Reddall and the Task Force by emailing it to Canon Cathy Black at [cathy@azdiocese.org](mailto:cathy@azdiocese.org), and receive approval from Bishop Reddall.*

## **Phase II External Indicators**

- A sustained reduction in cases for at least 14 days in your county. Information about your county (or zip code) can be obtained <https://www.azdhs.gov/preparedness/epidemiology-disease-control/infectious-disease-epidemiology/covid-19/dashboards/index.php>
- Local hospitals are able to treat all patients requiring hospitalization without overwhelming the system
- The ability to test all people with COVID-19 symptoms
- Lifting of "Stay at Home" orders from state and local officials
- ***Please note that until we have a vaccine that is widely administered, there is no way to absolutely ensure safety of those who gather together.***
- Individuals over age 60 and those with the following "pre-existing conditions" are particularly vulnerable to the effects of COVID-19 disease, and may be wise to stay home and continue to worship online during Phase II.
  - Uncontrolled diabetes
  - Asthma
  - Hypertension
  - History of lung disease
  - Immune system compromised
  - Undergoing chemotherapy

## **Phase II General Guidelines for Churches**

- **All people attending worship or any other events on church property must wear masks over their noses and mouths.**
- Offices can be open with staff staying appropriate distance from one another.
- Place anti-bacterial hand sanitizer dispensers at all entrances and in all restrooms. If you do not have these on hand, order them now so you will be ready to open in the future.
- Make Kleenex and covered trash receptacles available in several accessible places
- Acquire and plan for having masks on hand for people who did not bring a mask to church. Order them or have members make extras that can be given away.
- No Coffee Hour, congregational meals, or events involving food.
- To start Phase II, no Sunday School, youth group, or children's ministry

- Continue to offer Bible Study and Christian formation online as you are able; small groups of 10 or fewer people may meet in person for formation if they meet in a room of sufficient size to maintain six feet of distance between them.
- For church schools, preschools, and daycares: follow the guidelines and recommendations of the Arizona Department of Education and the National Association of Episcopal Schools.

## **Phase II Guidelines for Worship**

- It is essential that congregations continue online worship for those who cannot attend in person during Phase II.
- For the beginning of Phase II, worship capacity will be limited to the lower of either 50 people or 25% of the legal occupancy of your sanctuary to allow for safe social distancing in the church. For most congregations, that means that not all members will be able to attend at the same time. Options include:
  - Offering more services spread out through the weekend (with cleaning after each service)
  - Establishing a process to divide the congregation up into smaller groups for worship: reservations, a lottery, alphabetical assignments, etc.
  - Endeavor to try to leave a space or two for visitors to your congregation.
  - If you are in a congregation that can worship outside in a particular season, contact the Task Force for additional possibilities.
- If there is only one service, consider waiting to clean the church for 72 hours after the service to prevent infection for the cleaning crew. Current evidence suggests that Covid 19 remains viable for several hours to days on surfaces.
- Maintain six feet distance between family groups at all times.
- Baptismal fonts and holy water stoops must be drained.
- Remove items from pew racks: Prayer Books, Hymnals, pencils, etc.
- Acolyte robes that are shared should be washed after each use, and robes that are used by one individual should not be stored with robes used by others.
- Baptisms, weddings, and funerals: may be done in accordance with guidelines and limited by size of gathering to what would otherwise be allowable
- The safest worship service is spoken Morning or Evening Prayer. Congregations with a high percentage of vulnerable people should consider offering those services rather than the Holy Eucharist during Phase II.
- Minimize the touching of items for following worship, which could mean:
  - A single-use bulletin that includes hymn texts and congregational responses, set out on a table rather than handed out one by one
  - Encouraging members to bring their own Books of Common Prayer (or giving each member one to bring when they worship)
  - Using a downloadable bulletin on members' tablets and phones
  - Projecting prayers and responses on screens.
- Think through your entrance and exit procedures: who will ensure that people are wearing masks and keeping distancing? How will you let people leave worship to ensure there is no line at the door? Where can clergy stand to greet people that does not block an exit?

- The role of ushers/greeters is critical in this phase. They must be respected, able to be firm with parishioners, and welcoming to people who are lonely and isolated. Consider who is called to this ministry at this time.
- Consider your plans for restroom access and cleaning.
- Consider closing off any parts of the church that are not in use
- If your congregation meets in a building that you do not own, you must clean surfaces prior to your worship service.
- No processions down aisles that would bring ministers within six feet of worshippers.
- Music: One of the hardest recognitions of this Task Force is that given what we currently know, there is no safe way to permit choir or congregational singing. If there is room for a single cantor to sing with 20 feet distance around him or her (including distance from an accompanist), there may be a cantor. Otherwise, only instrumental music on the organ, string instruments, or percussion is permitted. No music by other wind instruments at this time. We encourage your creativity with finding ways for singers to continue to minister through music online, and for choirs to maintain their relationships and community.

### **Specific Guidelines for the Eucharist**

- Communion will be offered in one kind (bread) to the congregation
- No passing the Peace with physical touching.
- No passing of offering plates; put an offering plate in a central location where congregants can drop their offerings; continue to encourage online giving.
- The Celebrant and any ministers who are distributing communion will wash their hands with soap and water, or use hand sanitizer immediately prior to the prayer of consecration. The Celebrant must wear a mask during the prayer of consecration.
- If a eucharistic minister touches the hand of someone they are distributing communion to, they should stop, and go wash or sanitize their hands
- Please use only communion wafers and not bread that will be torn or divided
- Communion must be distributed while congregants are standing (i.e., not kneeling at an altar rail) and at a station where a six-foot distance is kept between those waiting.
- Those distributing communion must wear masks
- Remind congregants to please not touch the minister's hands when receiving communion.

### **Guidelines for emergency in-home pastoral visits during Phase II:**

Clergy may visit shut-ins who desire a pastoral visit under the following conditions:

- Prior to the visit, the clergy will contact the caregiver or church member to ensure that the conditions below can be met.
- Visits outside on a patio are ideal if the weather permits.
- Both the visitor and the visited do not have any symptoms of COVID-19.
- The clergy must wear an N95 mask, face shield, and gloves throughout the visit.
- During the visit, there is at least 6 feet distance between people.
- Eucharist may be shared with only the person being visited partaking of the wine.

## **Phase II.5**

*The Diocese of Arizona would rather add ministries and practices to our congregations as we move forward in the future rather than having to stop ministries and practices that have already regathered. To that end, we are creating a category of ministries in what we are calling “Phase II.5” which may be permitted once we are well into Phase II and understand more about transmission patterns of Covid-19, have reliable antibody testing, and/or have successfully lowered local infection rates to a point where we are able to expand upon our ministry. The Task Force will be evaluating these options once we have experience with Phase II. Some of these ministries may be authorized; others may not. They include:*

- Expanded size of gatherings to 100 people or 25% of capacity, or further increases in sizes of gatherings beyond those metrics.
- Congregational singing and choral singing
- In Person Sunday School and Youth Ministry
- Non-emergency Pastoral Visits by Lay Eucharistic Visitors and Clergy
- Some Coffee Hour and social gatherings
- Additional in-person Christian Formation

# Phase III

## **Phase III External Indicators**

*We will enter Phase III when there is either a vaccine for COVID-19 or effective methods of treating the virus. Phase III is likely 18-24 months away from us now, but could come sooner if a vaccine or treatment becomes available.*

## **Phase III Guidelines for Church Community**

- Offices are open
- Ministry around food (coffee hour, socials, pot-lucks) can resume.
- Outside Groups may resume meeting in church buildings
- Unrestricted pastoral visiting
- Full Children, Youth, and Family ministry

## **Phase III Guidelines for Worship**

- No size restrictions on worship services
- Maintain handwashing or sanitizing practices.
- Communion in both kinds for the congregation
- Reception at altar rail permitted
- Congregational singing and choirs resume
- Mask wearing still encouraged, but not required

## [Exterior Signs for Churches]

Welcome to our Church. We are doing our best to ensure that everyone who enters is kept safe and healthy.

All persons entering must be wearing a mask over their nose and mouth, and keep six feet distance between people who are not part of your household.

IF you have any of the following symptoms:

- cough
- Muscle pain
- Shortness of breath
- Diarrhea
- Rash
- Vomiting
- Abdominal pain
- Fever
- Red eye
- weakness
- Bruising or bleeding
- new joint pain that is not going away
- Severe headache
- lack of sense of smell or sense of taste

OR if in the past month have you been in contact with someone who was confirmed to have COVID 19

Please stay at home for 14 days and call your doctor

*(Clinical Characteristics of Corona Virus Disease 2019 in China, The New England Journal of Medicine April 30, 2020)*

## **Worksheet for Congregations who wish to Gather for in-person Worship during Phase II:**

*This worksheet offers the minimum of questions to be resolved prior to approval for a return to in-person worship. Larger churches, in particular, will need to provide a more substantial plan.*

Our Vestry or Bishop's Committee has read and agrees to abide by the guidance of the Diocese of Arizona regarding opening our congregation for worship, including following social distancing and wearing masks during worship.

What has worked well for us in Phase I is:

The Phase I practices that we intend to continue during Phase II are:

County:

The legal maximum occupancy of our worship space is:

Therefore, we will not hold any worship gatherings of more than \_\_\_\_\_ people (25% of maximum occupancy or 50 people, whichever is less).

The people responsible for ensuring that we do not exceed this maximum and that people attending worship abide by our policies are:

We will tentatively be offering the following services:

Our plan for communicating these plans to our congregation include:

Our practices for keeping social distancing during worship include:

Our plan for restroom use and cleaning is:

Our plan for sanctuary use and cleaning is:

Our plan for classes and formation is:

Our plan for outreach is:

Our plan for pastoral care is:

Our plan for use of church facilities by outside groups is:

Our plan for music is:

Our plan if a member of the congregation, staff, or clergy tests positive for COVID-19 is:

# Pre-ReOpen Cleaning/Sanitation Suggestions

By Bill Potts, Canon for Finance and Property

A number of online sources have reported that the Covid-19 virus has varying life cycles on surfaces. The Cleveland Clinic suggests the following as a guide for surface life span of the virus

Glass – 5 days  
Wood – 4 Days  
Plastic and stainless-steel – 3 days  
Cardboard – 24 hours  
Copper Surfaces – 4 hours

The CDC also provides some guidelines for regular cleaning and cleaning when infection is present. The following links will provide you with the CDC information

[https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html?deliveryName=USCDC\\_2067-DM26911](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html?deliveryName=USCDC_2067-DM26911)

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html#Cleaning-and-Disinfection>

If there has been the presence of the Covid-19 in your building within the past 5 days, your congregation will go back to Phase I for 14 days. Prior to gathering again, you will need to either:

1. Hire a reputable cleaning company to complete a full cleaning of your facility with an emphasis on the use of disinfecting solutions.
2. If hiring a company to clean is not feasible, please...
  - a. clean your facility using disinfecting solutions and materials.
  - b. use gloves at all time during the cleaning process to avoid potential exposure and cross contamination.
  - c. highly concentrate on those areas that will have high usage, (ie: door hardware, restroom facilities, water fountains, water coolers, kitchen facilities, etc.)
  - d. If disinfecting cleaning solutions are not readily available in your area, the CDC recommends a cleaning solution of 5 tablespoons (1/3<sup>rd</sup> cup) of bleach per gallon of water or 4 teaspoons of bleach per quart of water.

You are also encouraged to replace your HVAC filters to at least a MERV 11 (HEPA Filter).

## Resources for further reading:

[https://www.centerforhealthsecurity.org/our-work/pubs\\_archive/pubs-pdfs/2020/200417-reopening-guidance-governors.pdf](https://www.centerforhealthsecurity.org/our-work/pubs_archive/pubs-pdfs/2020/200417-reopening-guidance-governors.pdf)

<https://www.episcopalrelief.org/what-we-do/us-disaster-program/remoteministry/>

<https://www.aei.org/research-products/report/national-coronavirus-response-a-road-map-to-reopening/>

<https://churchleaders.com/pastors/pastor-articles/374906-24-questions-your-church-should-answer-before-people-return.html>

<https://www.azdiocese.org/coronavirus.html>

<https://www.facebook.com/1486909780/posts/10222436713575106/>

<https://www.infectioncontroltoday.com/covid-19/churches-could-be-deadliest-places-covid-19-pandemic>

<https://www.middleclassartist.com/post/nats-panel-of-experts-lays-out-sobering-future-for-singers-no-vaccine-no-safe-public-singing>