



Epiphany Parish – Walpole, Massachusetts ***COVID-19 Re-Gathering Information***

From the beginning, God's commandment to 'Love your neighbor as yourself' has driven our decisions about how we function as a church community during this pandemic. As we begin regathering, our decisions will continue to be driven by our love for each other and our community. Because of this, things will look different as we regather. We need to practice strict hygiene and physical distancing guidelines. Certain elements of our traditional worship services will not be permitted for some time. **These limitations are temporary**, but they are important to best safeguard the well-being of all God's people.

At this time, we are not returning to normal. The guidelines discussed throughout this document may seem daunting, unusual, and overwhelming. That's understandable – though temporary, the changes are significant. By your participation in these changes and adhering to these guidelines, **you, with the rest of the parish, are actively loving your neighbor.**

The first portion of this document contains everything you need to know to attend worship at this time, including

- key changes to the service,
- safety protocols,
- attendee requirements, and
- overall health and hygiene expectations.

The second portion of this document contains additional information specific to

- small groups and community groups,
- visiting the church/office (aside from worship services),
- workplace safety plan,
- pastoral care and life events, and
- plan for notifying the local board of health.

Note that the guidance could change as the conditions of the virus change. As we learn more about how to engage together in this temporary normal, obtain more guidance from the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts and healthcare professions, and the situation in our area evolves, Rev. Christen, the vestry, and the Regathering Committee will continue to work together to safely make our church as accessible as possible for as many people as possible.

We look forward to gathering with you again.

Worship Information

Worship – Indoor or Outdoor

- Service bulletins will be provided prior to the beginning of the service. To limit frequently touched surfaces, prayer books, hymnals, and Bibles have been removed from the pews. Anything you need for the service will be in the bulletin.
- During this stage of gathering, we are unable to have congregational singing and communion.
- The Peace is to be exchanged without physical touch (using a bow, wave or just words) and while maintaining social distancing.
- There will be no offering plate collection; however, there will be a collection box placed in the Narthex or on the lawn (when worship is outside) where you can leave your offering.
- All congregants who do not live in the same household are required to be distanced from each other by at least six feet at all times. Members of the same immediate household are permitted to sit together and be less than six feet apart. Seating areas for individuals and families will be designated and clearly marked. Ushers will direct attendees to their seats while maintaining a distance of at least six feet and will dismiss attendees row by row at the conclusion of the service.
 - For outdoor gatherings, parishioners are encouraged to bring their own lawn chairs. Some disinfected chairs will be available.
- Childcare will not be available at this time. Sunday School classes also will not be held in person but may be conducted virtually.
- To encourage appropriate social distancing, there will be no coffee hour or punch on the lawn allowed during this phase. We ask that people respect social distancing and avoid gathering in the Narthex, lawn, or parking lot.
- All attendees over 5 years of age and staff must always wear face coverings while they are on church property. Children 2 – 5 years of age may wear face coverings at parent/guardian’s discretion. It is requested that each person bring a face covering from home. Masks may be provided for people who forget to bring their own, but supply will be limited. In the event that you aren’t able to wear a mask for health reasons, we ask that you continue worshipping at home.
- If you have recently returned from out of state, please follow the current MA State travel guidance on self-quarantining after returning from your trip (found at www.mass.gov) Do not come to church if you are self-quarantining after returning from travel.
- There will be signage or floor markings for how attendees will enter, move about, and depart the church building and outdoor gathering space. Ushers will also direct the movement of people entering and leaving church and outdoor gathering space.
- For indoor gatherings, the number of attendees must be closely monitored to ensure compliance. At this time, we are allowed to have up to 40% of the church’s capacity present during an indoor service, as long as physical distance of 6 feet can be maintained between households. To ensure we stay within the limit, **anyone attending an indoor service will be required to sign-up online or call the office by Saturday at noon.** (Further details will be sent out before we hold any indoor worship service).
- **Worship will continue to be available via telephone and live stream** every Sunday morning so that parishioners who are unable to or choose not to attend in-person may join us virtually.

Health and Hygiene

- If you do not feel well, have any new onset symptoms of COVID-19, or have tested positive for COVID-19, please refrain from coming to church until you have had all of the following:
 - 3 days with no fever
 - Respiratory symptoms have improved (e.g. cough, shortness of breath)
 - 10 days since symptoms first appeared
- If you have come into close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, please do not come to church for 14 days after exposure.
- Parishioners who are at risk due to age and/or underlying health problems are encouraged to stay home and participate in worship virtually.
- Ushers will keep a list of attendees' names and phone numbers for contact tracing purposes. These lists will be kept on file in our parish office for 12 months and will be shared with appropriate health officials as required.
- The church has undergone a complete deep cleaning and disinfecting and will be cleaned and sanitized the day after each service by an employee or volunteer from Epiphany Parish. A more detailed cleaning plan is available on the church website and upon request.
- To ensure proper ventilation and air flow, the front door and windows in the sanctuary will be left opened. Please plan to dress appropriately depending on the weather.
- Attendees will have access to alcohol-based hand sanitizer at different locations throughout the sanctuary. Hand sanitizer will also be available for outdoor services.
- Restroom usage will be limited to one person inside the restroom at a time (or two members of the same household if one person needs assistance). Only one restroom on each floor will be open for use. Clorox wipes or an equivalent CDC-approved product will be provided and each user will be asked to wipe down doorknobs, light switches, countertops, sink, and toilet after use.

Small Groups and Community Groups

- All parish small groups, Christian formation events, and fellowship events, besides worship, will remain virtual during this stage to be welcoming and inclusive for all members of our parish.
- Leadership of all community groups will be informed of the following procedures before their group resumes meeting at Epiphany Parish. Leadership will sign the 'Epiphany Parish Outside Groups and Meetings COVID-19 Procedures' document agreeing to follow these procedures.
- A maximum of 20 people may meet in the undercroft at a time. Additional space may be provided if a groups needs to split into two groups to accommodate the group size requirements.
- The Undercroft will be set up with auditorium style seating with chairs to accommodate 20 people seated a minimum of 6ft apart. Groups will be asked to not move the chairs before, during, or after your meeting.
- The building will be disinfected after each meeting by Epiphany Staff. Disinfecting wipes will be available for groups to use to disinfect light switches, door knobs, other frequently touched surfaces, and bathrooms in between uses.
- Groups will be asked to open all windows and doors during meetings, as possible. All groups are responsible for ensuring that all doors and windows are closed and locked at the end of their meeting.

- Everyone entering the building must sign in with their name, phone number, and times entering and exiting the building. Meeting leadership must keep sign-in sheets with contact information for 2 months to help assist the Walpole Health department if contact tracing needed.
- Group leadership will be asked to review these procedures with all attendees at the beginning of every meeting.
- Members will inform meeting leadership and the Walpole Board of Public Health (508-660-7320) if they are diagnosed with COVID-19 and have entered the Epiphany Parish building within two weeks of developing symptoms.
- In addition to informing the Walpole Board of Public Health, meeting leadership must inform the parish office if an attendee is diagnosed with COVID-19 and has entered the building within two weeks of developing symptoms. (508-668-2353 or office.epiphany@verizon.net)

Visiting the Church/Office

- Anyone over 5 years of age must always wear face coverings while on church property. Children 2 – 5 years of age may wear face coverings at parent/guardian’s discretion. Face coverings must be worn in all areas of the church building. Masks may be provided for people who forget to bring their own, but supply will be limited.
- There is a sign-in sheet inside the driveway side door. All visitors must sign in and provide their:
 - name,
 - phone number, and
 - entry and exit times.
- Social distancing must be observed. There may be no more than one visitor in the office at any one time.
- Sign-in sheets will be kept in the parish office for 2 months and will be shared with appropriate health officials as required.

Workplace Safety Plan

- Employees will not come to work if they are experiencing new onset symptoms of COVID-19 (fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, or diarrhea) or have had contact with anyone with a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 within the last 14 days.
- Everyone entering the building who is over 5 years of age must always wear face coverings while on church property. Children 2 – 5 years of age may wear face coverings at parent/guardian’s discretion. Face coverings must be worn in all common areas, hallways, bathrooms, the sanctuary, and offices. The only exception is when working alone in one of the two offices.
- Everyone entering the building must sign in and provide their:
 - name,
 - phone number, and
 - entry and exit times.
- Sign-in sheets will be kept in the parish office for 2 months and will be shared with appropriate health officials as required.

- Social distancing of 6 feet or more must always be observed. There may be no more than one visitor in the office at any one time.
- All employees will practice good hygiene and will wash hands frequently. Hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol will be provided for employee and visitor use.
- Employees must inform Rev. Christen Mills if they have a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 and have entered the building within 14 days of developing symptoms or receiving a diagnosis.
- All employees will be trained in the above procedures before returning to work. Employees will sign the 'Epiphany Parish COVID-19 Employee Covenant' agreeing to follow these procedures.

Pastoral Care and Life Events

- At this time, pastoral care will be done primarily by phone or online video chat. However, outdoor, socially distant pastoral visits may be done in rare circumstances. Face coverings must be worn by everyone over 5 years of age. Children 2 – 5 years of age may wear face coverings at parent/guardian's discretion.
- Pastoral care for those in higher-risk categories for contracting the virus continues to be restricted to phone or online contact.
- Baptism is to be administered in emergency situations only; the Thanksgiving for the Birth or Adoption of a Child may be used if current state and diocesan safety protocols and directives about the size of gatherings are observed.
- Weddings and funerals may be held, observing current state and diocesan directives about the size of gatherings and safety protocols.

Plan for Notifying Local Board of Health

- All sign-in sheets and attendance lists will be kept in the parish office for 2 months and provided to health officials as required. Epiphany Parish will work with our local board of public health and assist them with all contact tracing requests.
- If any parishioner, staff member, or visitor to Epiphany Parish tests positive for COVID-19 within 14 days of their most recent visit to the church building, we will notify our local board of health.
- Care will be taken to protect the privacy of any parishioner, staff member, or visitor's health information.

— **We will work with the local Board of Health with all COVID related issues.**