

GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF DETROIT

COVID-19 Parish Procedures and Directives

Effective March 1, 2021

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have taken toll on the health the faithful of our Blessed Metropolis of Detroit. As we must remain vigilant to protect the health of the faithful of our parishes, the Metropolis is updating protocols with provisions for limited reopening measures based on the following:

- The number of cases of COVID-19 are declining throughout the Metropolis of Detroit from the previous record-numbers of the late fall of 2020.
- Vaccines are now being made available to more and more of the population.
- Most of the states and municipalities are beginning, or have begun, reopening measures.

These directives supersede all other directives or protocols issued from the Metropolis of Detroit but are subject to change at any moment as we must remain alert and responsive to ever changing nature of the pandemic.

If there is a question on any issue described below, please consult the Metropolis of Detroit chancellor regarding clarity or deviation.

SECTION 1 – General Directives

- **Masks** – The May 22, 2020 Reopening Protocols that stated wearing a mask in the church is REQUIRED is still in effect. Everyone must wear a mask while in the church or in church buildings until further notice. This is a mandate that must be followed and upheld.

If one does not wear a mask (properly), the parish council members, ushers, or priest will ask one to be worn. Non-compliance with this order will force us to request the removal of that person from the church property.

- **Capacity** – The maximum capacity of any divine service is determined by either adequate social distancing as defined below or by the applicable state guideline, whichever is more stringent. A parish council may choose to be more restrictive with permission of the Metropolis.

- **Social Distancing** – Social Distancing Guidelines remain at a minimum distance of 6 feet between family units. Although all churches should already be sectioned according to proper social distancing guidelines, this guideline is not only for worship but for all activities.

The only persons that are not required to wear masks are the clergy (except for processions around the pews and the distribution of Holy Communion/Antidoron/etc.), a chanter that is alone at the chant stand (left and/or right), children ages 6 and under, or a speaker that is alone (social distanced) on the solea for a presentation.

While in the aisles waiting for Holy Communion or antidoron, the people should remain socially distanced.

- **Sanitization** – Any area that is utilized (Church, Restrooms, Entries, Meeting Rooms, etc.) are sanitized after every use. *If possible, wait 2-3 days before cleaning and follow the CDC guidelines for disinfecting the surfaces.*

SECTION 2 – DIVINE SERVICES

- A. The churches may have health checks at the entrance to the church. This may consist of a series of questions about general symptoms and/or temperature checks with a touchless thermometer.
- B. The churches should offer masks at the entrance of the church to everyone who does not have one.
- C. Anyone who is currently experiencing **any symptoms of illness must stay at home.**
- D. Bulletins may be left for parishioners to pick-up at a suitable place in the narthex or nave.
- E. There will be no liturgical books in the pews.
- F. There will be no choirs until further notice.
- G. Items to be distributed (Antidoron, Artous, Koliva) is to be prepared and individually bagged by one person wearing gloves and a mask. *The priest may designate a person who is wearing gloves and a mask to distribute Koliva.*
- H. Donations or stewardship should be received in a centralized location. Traditional trays/baskets should not be passed. *Online giving options are encouraged and should be referenced where available.*

- I. There are to be no indoor fellowship hours until further notice. *See section 3 for reopening provisions of certain indoor ministries.*
- J. Acolytes are permitted to serve (maintaining social distance). Acolytes must wear a mask at all times while serving in the altar.

SECTION 3 – MINISTRY RE-OPENING

Below are guidelines for the re-opening of certain ministerial activities. All activities must be in compliance with the general directives of Section 1 of this protocol.

- A. Within the limits established by these directives, the priest and parish council may decide to use the church and/or other related buildings for ministries. If there is a conflict between the priest and the parish council on the interpretation of these directives, the determination will be made by the Metropolis.
- B. All reasonable efforts should be made to have a zoom option for meetings for participation of anyone not comfortable attending in-persons meetings.
- C. Hand-sanitizing stations must be in every room in which a gathering could take place, and everyone must use the sanitizer upon entrance to the room.
- D. No food may be distributed or consumed during any ministry gathering (unless medically necessary – contact the Metropolis for guidance). Water may be drunk, but masks must be put back on immediately after a sip. This is not an excuse to lower a mask for more than a few seconds.
- E. Certain activities may be allowed outdoors as the weather improves in the various areas of the Metropolis. Fellowship hours, certain youth activities, meetings, etc., may be allowed outdoors in compliance with these directives and any local ordinances and laws.
- F. Before and after the ministry, no lingering in the halls or rooms is allowed.
- G. Church School and Greek School programs may resume in-person classes after having submitted a plan of procedures and receiving permission from the Metropolis (programs that include dancing and/or singing are not to resume). When preparing a plan of procedure to submit to the Metropolis assuring compliance with these directives, consider including the following:
 - i. Procedures to avoid crowding: class starting and ending times, size of meeting spaces, layout of class space, etc.
 - ii. Limiting areas of possible virus transmission: shared supplies, etc.
 - iii. Ventilation: Doors/windows remaining open, etc.

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Guidance for Metropolis Clergy

Effective March 1, 2021

- A. Concelebrations of clergy may take place after receiving guidance from the Metropolis. Parishes that have two priests should have only one of the priests celebrate at a time (exceptions may be made with permission from the Metropolis). The other clergyman/clergymen should be present at an appropriate distance in the altar. However, both may receive Holy Communion according to the rubrics of the Church.
- B. Clergy and altar servers must take their temperature before coming to church. They also must thoroughly wash their hands prior to services and again immediately prior to distributing Holy Communion.
- C. The priest should wear a mask while serving at any divine service. The priest may choose not to wear a mask while in the altar but must wear a mask during the distribution of Holy Communion and antidoron and during any processions around the pews.
- D. Priests are not to offer their hands or blessing crosses for veneration by the faithful.
- E. Holy Communion will be distributed to those desiring and prepared to partake. Parishioners are reminded not to judge others based on their individual decision in this regard.
- F. It is clearly understood that the Holy Communion is the very Body and Blood of Christ which cannot be tainted by any harmful thing, and that those who receive it with proper intent of mind and heart cannot be harmed by it. However, for the pastoral reason that we do not want people to allow their fear of the coronavirus to separate them from the chalice, clergy are to tip the sacrament into the opened mouths of the faithful, being careful that the spoon not come into contact with the person. If accidental contact with the individual is made, the spoon should be immediately replaced or sanitized by dipping it in grain alcohol (140 proof or more) for at least 30 seconds and dipping it in a rinse of water and wiping it dry prior to the next use.
- G. In lieu of a Communion Cloth, the parish will have disposable napkins available to the faithful, and upon approaching the chalice, the parishioner would take a napkin, hold it under their own chin, wipe or dab their mouth, and then dispose of the napkin in a container, the contents of which will be burned after the service.
- H. The priest may offer pastoral counsel and provide the sacraments of Communion, Unction, and Confession on an appointment basis. Proper precautions for limiting contact and proximity must be observed.
- I. No sacraments are allowed outdoors.
- J. For the Sunday of Orthodoxy 2021, the priest and acolytes may process with icons in the usual manner. Once on the solea, the acolytes should be socially distanced.