



THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN
COLORADO

A Guide for Reflection and Planning
Transition from
Season I to Season II





A Time of Prayer, Discernment and Preparation

The Coronavirus pandemic has changed the reality of every aspect of our lives and our churches. As we continue to lament social distancing and the many losses of this time of crisis, many of us are beginning to imagine and plan for how we will begin the transition to a time of gathering in-person in our communities again as we begin to take the first steps in preparing to move from Season I to Season II.

How to use this document

As followers of Jesus Christ, our call is to love God and to love our neighbor. In this moment, we can do that by caring for God's people and doing no harm. We are called to go the extra mile to protect those who are most vulnerable. This kind of sacrificial love can be inconvenient and perhaps uncomfortable, but we are asking the Episcopal Church in Colorado to love enough to go the extra mile together.

This document is meant to begin a conversation among church leaders. Your Office of the Bishop's staff has compiled information on how we can reduce the risk of our churches becoming spreaders of infection as well as gathering tools that can help us think theologically and pastorally as we make decisions that will affect the whole body of Christ. In this time, we are all learning together, and our hope is that we can work together to discern best practices on how we walk the Way of Love.

We encourage each congregation to gather with core congregational leadership and work through this guidebook together. We invite you to deep conversations and information gathering with as many congregants as possible. The Episcopal Church in Colorado covers a wide array of geographic and social contexts and the Bishop and the staff of the Office of the Bishop stand ready to support you.

We believe that this guidebook, along with government guidelines, will help us do the challenging work of transitioning from Season I to Season II in ways that protect the vulnerable and mitigate risk. Due to the diversity of ministry contexts across Colorado, if you have specific questions then contact the appropriate staff member in the Office of the Bishop.



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Discernment

As the Body of Christ, we have embarked on a journey in uncharted territory. So many lay and clergy leaders have shown amazing creativity and resilience these last few months and it is clear that the Holy Spirit is moving in our midst. We pray for the safety and well-being of all our people as we listen to the Spirit and reimagine how we are called to be church in a COVID-19 world.

Many of you have already prayerfully discerned a path forward and others are in the midst of this discernment. We invite you to consider the following activities as you prepare to take these first step and as we progress through Season II:

1. Establish a robust team of leaders to help discern a path forward.
2. Reflect on the mission and core values of your community and how these will be carried forward as you begin to move to Season II.
3. Review this document with the vestry and/or leadership team.
4. Investigate your own context. Study how the virus is affecting your area. What percentage of people have been tested? What has been the trend over the last three weeks? How many active cases do you currently have in your town/city/county?
5. Create a survey (sample included in resources) for the entire parish to gauge people's comfort level for returning to in-person worship.
6. Have conversations about what is currently going well in your congregational life. What does your congregation long for? Prioritize these longings and prayerfully consider creative ways to meet these longings and keep people safe.
7. Engage the leadership and/or the entire congregation in prayer and Bible Study about how to proceed forward. Sample materials are included in the resources.
8. Discern a strategy for the coming weeks with an eye to flexibility as new information becomes available and adjustments need to be made.
9. As you plan in-person gatherings for worship, please let the Office of the Bishop know of your plans.
10. Periodically re-evaluate and possibly expand your plan throughout Season II, repeating the steps as necessary.



General Guidelines for Season II Transition

Below are some general topics and suggested protocols to consider when transitioning from Season I to Season II. We are well aware that each space, context, culture, and congregation will look different. Some of these will be more helpful than others. That being said, we invite you to consider the following:

- In the interest of welcoming and including all of our people, church leaders are encouraged to survey parishioners about their hopes and concerns about congregational gathering.
- Individuals with health risk factors or are 65 years and older, are encouraged per the CDC to continue to stay home and stay safe; this includes clergy, musicians, and staff.
- Congregations are strongly encouraged to continue to keep church buildings closed for in-person worship, especially in areas with high rates of infection.
- Church offices are encouraged to limit the number of people in the space, ensure adequate distancing, wear facemasks and ensure proper sanitization.
- Churches might consider expanding their current online/virtual worship by including more in-person participants, we ask thorough consideration and adherence to the local, state and CDC guidelines to ensure the safety of all participating.
- Everyone, especially leaders, should model mask wearing as much as possible to prepare people for this new reality.

Stewardship

- Consider how to better welcome digital parishioners into your congregation in preparation for in-person worship and gatherings.
- Encourage online giving directly to your church through a reputable e-giving source.
- Remember to invite and encourage people to maintain their financial support as best they are able.

Building use

- Building use outside groups and/or renters (12-step groups, Scouts, *ect.*) is strongly discouraged and we invite leaders to consult with the Chancellor and the Canon to the Ordinary regarding rental agreements and liability risks.
- Leaders (clergy, vestry, worship leaders) are encouraged to discern deeply about their own comfort and willingness to return to in-person worship as well as how to avoid applying any subtle pressure for congregants to return to in-person worship.
- Leaders are asked to consider how the church might respond if someone with COVID-19 has been in the building and in contact with others, including issues around communication to the parish and matters of confidentiality.



Clergy or Lay Pastoral Leaders

- Monitor your own health profile. Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Be aware of your leadership in influencing others by modeling safety and care for others.
- Physical touch of anyone is strongly discouraged, even in the context of a liturgy.
- Take time for a sabbath at least once a week. Be sure to attend to your mental, physical, and spiritual health with special care.
- Connect with colleagues for connection and collaboration.

Vestry/Bishop's Committee members and Wardens

- Monitor your own health profile.
- Assist in gathering the congregation's opinions about re-gathering.
- Collaborate and communicate with congregations in surrounding area.
- Attend to your mental, physical, and spiritual health.
- Connect with colleagues for connection and collaboration.
- Assist in expanding communication and connection among parishioners.

For Clergy and Vestries Considering In-person Social Gatherings

If current trends continue, congregations may want to consider in-person gatherings other than worship. These events should be kept as small as possible and should not exceed 10 people under current governmental guidelines. This category includes Bible Studies, youth groups, or social gatherings.

Questions for discernment

1. How many people in our community are in the high-risk category?
2. Are there ways to better create community and connection in our congregation without gathering in-person?
3. Who will be responsible for ensuring people maintain safety protocols?
4. What is God teaching us at this moment?

Practical Considerations

- Online gatherings are still strongly encouraged, if possible.
- All gatherings must be within the recommended governmental guidelines. This includes wearing a mask at all times and physical distancing at least 6 feet.
- If the gathering involves food, everyone must bring his/her/their own food and beverage.
- Include online options in addition to in-person gatherings.
- Reoccurring events should be scheduled for three weeks at a time.



For Clergy and Vestries Considering Leading Online Worship from Church Buildings

We have all faced the challenge of adapting and becoming an online church. And even with this challenge, there have been many blessings: people have joined in worship from far and wide, parishioners who have been homebound have felt more included. As we enter this new season, when there is some potential for in-person gathering, we want everyone to remain cognizant of the risks involved, of what it means to gather some and not others and how to maintain the new connections forged during online worship.

For congregations that are not currently providing services online, the Office of the Bishop is able to assist and support you in developing this capacity.

Questions for discernment

1. How many people in our community are in the high-risk category?
2. Does our plan reflect our core values as followers of Jesus? If so, how?
3. Are there creative ways to better connect people to God using technology?
4. How are we creating a sense of community and connection in our congregation?
5. Do we have the resources (time, talent, and treasure) to enhance our online worship experience?
6. Does our website reflect our new reality and way of worshiping?
7. Who in our congregation will be disappointed about continuing to worship online? How can we pastorally respond to these persons?
8. What is the role of the clergy in online worship? What is the role of lay leaders?
9. Is our future model sustainable over a long period of time?
10. What is God teaching us at this moment?

Practical Considerations

- Clergy, musicians, and staff with health risk factors or are 65 years and older, are asked to abide by the “Safer at Home” protocols. Much of our leadership is expressed in modeling the behavior and attitudes we want to see.
- Wearing masks combined with physical distancing significantly reduces the spread of contagion. Wearing masks and maintain 6 feet of space (north, east, south, and west) when encountering others and in public indoor spaces demonstrates care for all who are gathered.
- Singing poses a significant risk of viral spreading. Congregations will have to carefully consider how worship looks and feels with one person singing, and how a soloist would



manage being at least 30 feet from anyone else in the room (including the accompanist) to avoid a potentially devastating outbreak.

- Consider including one or more lay people who are not in a high-risk category.
- Basic facilities maintenance protocols are especially important now. This includes replacing all HVAC filters (furnace, air conditioning, air cleaner devices), increasing the frequency of filter replacement, and adjusting HVAC thermostat programming so that recycled air is not blowing when groups are gathering. This also includes fans or swamp coolers.
- Cleaning and sanitizing surfaces is critical during this time with particular care given to doorknobs, door push bars, railings, bathrooms, pews, chairs, and other areas touched by human hands, before and after worship.
- To encourage personal hygiene, congregations are asked to provide adequate hand sanitizer and cleaning wipes, with at least 70% alcohol, at all church entrances.



For Clergy and Vestries Considering Leading In-Person Worship Indoors or Outdoors

Some congregations in our diocese will be ready to consider moving to some configuration of in-person worship. These congregations will generally be parishes with enough space, and small enough congregations to safely gather. If your survey results reflect a desire to move towards worship, we invite you to consider the following:

Questions for discernment:

1. How many people in our congregation are in the high-risk category?
2. What is our top priority at the time? Why?
3. Does our plan reflect our core values as followers of Jesus and our common life together? If so, how?
4. What happens if there is a spike in the number of cases of COVID-19 and we have to close our building again?
5. How will people feel if some people are allowed to return and others cannot or choose not to return at this time?
6. Do we have the resources (time, talent, and treasure) to maintain our safety plan?
7. How can we pastorally respond to people who will be disappointed about returning to in-person worship?
8. What will it feel like to worship in this new way?
9. As leaders, what are we most concerned or anxious about if we resume worship?
10. What is God teaching us at this moment?

Practical Considerations

Preparing the congregation and space

- Crisis communications planning is necessary as a part of opening our spaces. As an exercise and as part of crisis communications preparedness, we encourage church leaders to develop a media strategy for the scenario where a number of parishioners in your congregation have contracted COVID-19 as a result of in-person worship and one person has died. The Canon for Communications, Mike Orr is willing to be of support in this exercise with tips for interacting with the media.
- At least two weeks prior to returning, communicate your COVID-19 protocols across multiple media venues (email, snail mail, website, social media, print) so that everyone has an opportunity to review and understand what is expected.
- Post visual information/signs outlining protocols and directions for physical distancing, hand cleaning hygiene, use of facemasks, respiratory etiquette, etc., in multiple locations throughout the building.



- Provide adequate hand sanitizer and cleaning wipes, with at least 70% alcohol, at all church entrances and in all common areas.
- Determine in advance of in-person worship how many people can safely and comfortably fit into your sanctuary, chancel, and nave while maintaining physical distance (marking family/individual space with 6 feet distance).
- Establish a plan to count and document worship attendees and cap attendance once seating/space capacity has been reached.
- Consider how ushers would respond should the number of people arriving for in-person worship exceeds the designated capacity.
- Designate a person to welcome and coordinate seating, cleaning teams, media contact.
- Articulate what are non-negotiable behavioral expectations regarding the protocols. Develop a plan to appropriately and pastorally manage those who refuse to follow safety protocols and communicate the plan to all parish leaders.
- Finding those parishioners who have the “gift and skills of detail” will enable congregations to prepare for and fulfill the safety guidelines and protect our people.

Cleaning

- Organize sanitation or cleaning teams, policies, and practices for all areas before and after worship. This should be sustainable for the foreseeable future.
- For peace of mind, a deep clean of the building is recommended prior to the first in-person worship gathering.
- Replace all HVAC filters (furnace, air conditioning, air cleaner devices) and increase the frequency of filter replacement. HVAC thermostats should be adjusted or programmed so that air is not blowing when groups are gathering.
- Sanitize doorknobs, door push bars, railings, bathrooms, pews, chairs and other areas touched by human hands, before and after worship.
- Remove all kneelers, if possible.
- Empty and sanitize holy water/baptismal fonts, tract racks, and other furnishings.
- Cordon off and/or close all halls, rooms, offices, hallways, and public spaces except for worship space and necessary bathrooms.
- Reduce and monitor the number of entrances to worship spaces in order to better control numbers of worshipers and enforce safety protocols and directions.

For Ushers/Greeters

- Train ushers, greeters and volunteers for every point in the parishioner’s/guest's journey from the parking lot to a designated entrance.
- Remove hymnals, Prayer Books, Bibles, welcome cards, and all other items from pews.
- Clearly mark seating areas in pews and chancel/sanctuary outlining at least 6 feet distance.
- Parishes are encouraged to eliminate as many touch points as possible and asked to promote the use of projection and personal digital devices for bulletins and orders of service. If you



must provide paper bulletins, include provisions for sanitary distribution by gloved greeters/ushers and ask worship participants to take them home for disposal.

- Direct users of bathrooms to disinfect surfaces and handles before and after use with cleaning wipes provided.

During Worship

- Congregations are asked to maintain online worship for parishioners unable to attend in-person worship for all services so people who must remain home can continue to participate.
- Worship leaders and participants are asked to wear facemasks or cloth coverings are encouraged at all times.
- Provide adequate masks for visitors or those who forget their masks.
- Maintain at least a 6 feet physical distance between individuals/household units.
- Worship gatherings are now limited to less than 10 people while maintaining 6 feet physical distance for all. If local municipal guidelines permit an expanded number to gather, please let be in touch with the Office of the Bishop about how you will adhere to safety protocols.
- Develop a plan for people entering and exiting pews or seating that allows at least 6 feet distance at all times.
- Develop a plan for the altar party vesting and entering the sanctuary that maintains at least 6 feet between each member of the altar party (30 feet for anyone singing or chanting) and between parishioners.
- Morning Prayer, Ante Communion, or other non-Eucharistic worship continue while we, as a Church, discern a Eucharistic practice that is faithful to the theology and worship of the Episcopal Church and inclusive of all of our members. Communion bread and wine should not be distributed during this season nor any form of virtual communion.
- Develop communications around the lack of congregational singing, the use of wind instruments and other practices which dramatically increase the risk of the spread of respiratory droplets and possible infection.
- If a soloist is singing, provide at least 30 feet safe distance from the soloist, and the soloist cannot be positioned in the choir loft or balcony, if it exposes the congregation.
- Strongly discourage any and all touching or physical contact (during entering the space, exiting the space or at the Peace) as these behaviors spread the virus more easily.
- Invite parishioners to continue with online giving as available. Place in-person offerings in a stationary, designated container. Direct parishioners not to touch the offering container. A container with a slot in the lid is recommended.
- Develop and communicate a plan for dismissing congregants in an orderly way to ensure social distancing as people exit.
- To avoid crowding and bottle necks, eliminate receiving lines following a service.
- No coffee hour, nursery care, social and educational gatherings, or other receptions at any time, unless held virtually.



Sacramental Life

Holy Baptism

The intention of Holy Baptism is that it is done in community by a priest in the context of a Sunday morning principal service. We also know that this rite presents some real challenges in our current context. Our bishop views these circumstances as what the Book of Common Prayer refers to as an emergency. If the baptism cannot be delayed, then we invite clergy to consider the following guidelines:

Preparation

- Ensure a plan for physical distancing during service allowing no more than 10 people. If local municipal guidelines permit an expanded number to gather, please let be in touch with the Canon to the Ordinary with how your congregation plans to gather.
- Masks must be worn at all times by everyone present over the age of 2.
- Outdoor baptisms with creative substitute fonts are encouraged.
- Water is put into the font prior to service. Consider adding a small amount of “tearless” soap as an extra precaution.
- Only one candidate per Holy Baptism liturgy at this time.
- During this time, private baptisms are encouraged as a safety concern.
- The Baptism should be recorded, if possible, for later use in a virtual service or live-streamed.
- The priest should be physically present with the baptismal party.
- Anyone 65 years old and older, and/or individuals with health risk factors, should be encouraged to stay home and view online.
- Prior to the service, the priest and participants should wash their hands for at least 30 seconds.

During the Holy Baptism Service

- The service begins at page 299 in the Book of Common Prayer with the opening acclamation and continues with the collect, one or more lessons, the Presentation and Examination of the Candidate, Baptismal Covenant, and Prayers for the Candidate.
- It is recommended that the priest wash his/her/their hands just prior to the Thanksgiving over the water.
- The priest touches the water only when instructed to on page 307, with the words, “Now sanctify...”
- If a child, then the parent(s) pour water over the child being baptized as the priest says, “N., I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”
- If an adult, we recommend a person living with the person being baptized pour water over the person being baptized with as the priest says the words, “N., I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”



- The parent or person living with the person being baptized then makes the sign of the cross on the person's head, as the priest says, "N., you are sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ's own forever."
- The service continues with the prayers on page 307 and concludes with the Peace (physically distanced).

The Celebration and Blessing of Marriages

We know that marriages are festive occasions where traditionally friends and family gather to celebrate the love of two people. Even in normal times, these ceremonies can be joyous and stressful at the same time. We recommend the following guidelines:

- Premarital counseling can be done virtually.
- Create a plan for physical distancing during service and allowing no more than 10 people or the recommended number for gathering per local government protocols at the time of the celebration.
- Masks must be worn at all times by everyone over the age of 2.
- Everyone signing the marriage license should use his/her/their own pens.
- The clergy member must be physically present with people who are getting married.
- Outdoor liturgies are encouraged.
- All safety measures for Sunday worship apply to marriages as well.
- The service concludes with the Peace found on page 431. The bride and groom share the Peace and the witnesses share their greeting and support with applause and no physical contact.
- Have a plan for those who might choose to ignore these guidelines.
- Clergy are strongly discouraged from attending any receptions or social gatherings for their personal safety and to avoid possibly spreading the virus.
- Clergy should avoid posing for pictures where physical distancing is not practiced.

Ministration at the time of death

The period when a person nears death is a holy and tender moment. We recognize the comfort of touch and the power of an embrace for those grieving. That said, in these times and circumstances we also need to protect our own health and those around us. Please consider the following:

- This rite can be done virtually, especially when the person is dying of COVID-19. Clergy in high-risk categories are strongly encouraged not to perform this rite in-person.
- Masks must be worn at all times.
- Physical distancing should be observed.
- If oil is to be used, a family or household member may anoint the person near death.



Funerals

We recognize that funerals in normal times are emotional events. During this pandemic, our own mortality is more real than ever for most people. We advise clergy to pay special attention to those who grieve during this time. If the death is a result of COVID-19, we ask you to take extreme precautions.

- Planning for the funeral should be done virtually, if possible.
- Ensure a plan for physical distancing during service and no more than 10 people or local municipal guidelines on the number of people permitted to gather.
- Masks must be worn at all times by everyone in attendance.
- Cremation is encouraged during this time.
- If the remains were cremated, then sanitize the urn after receiving it from the funeral home.
- The clergy member must be physically present at the service.
- Outdoor liturgies are encouraged.
- All safety measures for Sunday worship apply to funerals as well.
- Clergy are strongly discouraged from attending any receptions or social gatherings for their personal safety.



For Clergy and Vestries Considering Reopening Parish Offices

We recognize that some parishes may be ready to begin the process of opening their offices and that staff sizes vary widely across our diocese. Please consider the work environment you are providing for your employees. We ask that no congregation compel an employee to return to the office if he/she/they do not feel comfortable coming into the office. No matter the size or composition of your staff, we invite to consider the following:

- Employees 65 years old and older, and/or individuals with health risk factors, should be encouraged to continue to stay home and stay safe and should not return to the office.
- Offer employees the option to work remotely and no one should not be punished or shamed in any way for choosing to exercise that option.
- Urge employees to do daily health assessments before entering office, and to remain home if experiencing any illness symptoms.
- Sufficient hand sanitizer and cleaning supplies should be made available to all employees.
- Facemasks or cloth coverings should be worn at all times, unless the employee is alone in his/her/their own office.
- All employees must practice regular hand washing throughout the day.
- Maintain at least 6 feet physical distancing at all times.
- Office use limited to 50% of occupancy as determined by Fire Marshall while maintaining 6 feet physical distance.
- Provide physical partitions between employees as needed.
- Eating meals with multiple people or use of common kitchen is discouraged.
- In-person meetings are limited to no more than 5 people with adequate physical distancing.
- Avoid use of elevators when possible and reserve elevator use for those who need it most, maintaining at least a 6 feet distance.
- High contact areas and bathrooms cleaned and sanitized periodically throughout the day.
- Ensure common areas and lobbies are cleaned and sanitized periodically throughout the day.
- Avoid sharing of equipment and sanitize equipment, such as photocopiers, after every use.
- Provide hand sanitizer and cleaning wipes at entrance and in all common areas.
- Direct users of bathrooms to disinfect surfaces and handles before and after use with cleaning wipes provided.
- Directions and protocols for safe practices to be posted at all entrances and in common areas.



Feeding Ministries

COVID-19 has increased the vulnerability of the most vulnerable in our community. Parishes who serve those in need are responding faithfully to our call to seek and serve Christ in all people. Some congregations have also discerned to begin new outreach ministries during this time. As you undertake this important and Godly work, please consult these guidelines:

Soup Kitchens/Feeding programs

- Government protocols for group size, physical distancing, sanitation, and masks must be followed.
- Food may not be prepared inside the church building unless a plan for safe food preparation that complies with government safety protocol is developed and followed.
- Continue to distribute food for take-out, if space does not allow for physical distancing.
- Food buffets are strongly discouraged, and food should be distributed in “to go” bags.
- Employees and volunteers 65 years old and older, and/or individuals with health risk factors, should continue to stay home and stay safe.

Food Pantries

- Create an alternate delivery system such as a drive through distribution or curbside pickup.
- Prepackaged bags and other foods are distributed while maintaining 6 feet physical distance. All volunteers should maintain 6 feet social distancing while working.
- Pre-bag produce so people are not touching in self-select models.
- Request that clients wear gloves or require them to wash their hands /use sanitizer before selecting their food products.
- Require clients who are sick or symptomatic to stay home and ask a friend or neighbor to pick up their groceries.
- Extend hours or open an additional day so clients are spread out and there isn't congestion in the space or in the line.
- Limit the number of people in a food pantry space.
- If a program has an appointment system, admit fewer people for each appointment. Add additional appointment times.
- Consider using texting verses having people wait in line for food at agencies. Have them wait in their cars and you text when it is their turn to come in.
- Encourage regular cleaning of counters, handles on carts (if using grocery carts), doorknobs/handles, pens, computers stations, etc.
- Postpone any food demos/cooking classes and refrain from offering food samples.
- Employees and volunteers 65 years old and older, and/or individuals with health risk factors, should continue to stay home and stay safe.

Consult [USDA Disaster Manuel](#) for more guidance or consult Anthony Suggs, Missioner for Advocacy & Social Justice for concerns not addressed above.



Third-Party Use of Church Buildings

A Message from the Bishop

As leaders across our Diocese begin to explore how to safely navigate from Season I, Season II, and Season III, which may include in-person gatherings, I am necessarily cautious. I am cautious because in regard to this pandemic my highest priority for our church is the safety and care of all God's people.

I have been in conversations with our Chancellor, Lawrence R. Hitt II, our Emergency Preparedness Director, the Rev. Canon Carl Andrews, and Church Insurance, trying to imagine how we can continue to minister to our community. I have been advised again and again that use of our church buildings by outside groups puts us at risk. Most congregations do not monitor how community groups enter or exit the building, and there is difficulty of ensuring that these groups adhere to safety protocols. This means that use of our buildings by third party groups pose an increased risk of spreading the virus, which places our congregations at greater risk for liability.

Accordingly, as we develop safety/reopening plans for our own members and ministries, I ask that congregations delay re-opening buildings to community groups until we have better information and better processes for monitoring these gatherings.

These are difficult times that require us to think in ways that we've never considered. And while I recognize that our buildings have been a safe haven for many in recovery, I am also aware that we are all at risk. As we move forward, into the next Season, we will continue exploring how to safely accommodate our third-party users. I look forward to hearing your ideas on developing safety plans with our 12-step groups and community partners.

We are being called in this time: called to love, called to faithfulness, called to be the Body of Christ for the world. I thank God for all of the congregational leaders who have shown such care for God's people and who have embodied the Gospel so well in these difficult and uncertain days. I am convinced that even now, God is with us, transforming us and blessing us to be the Church in the world.

+Kym



Resources

The Risks - Know Them - Avoid Them

<https://www.erinbromage.com/post/the-risks-know-them-avoid-them>

Emotional Life Cycle of a Disaster (Episcopal Relief and Development)

<https://www.episcopalrelief.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/emotional-lifecycle-of-a-disaster-copy.pdf>

Faith-Based Response to Epidemics + Pandemics (Episcopal Relief and Development)

<https://www.episcopalrelief.org/what-we-do/us-disaster-program/faith-based-response-to-epidemics/>

The Episcopal Church in Colorado Seasonal Approach for Regathering

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/ymoas37gx375c3n/Seasonal%20Approach%20to%20Regathering.pdf?dl=0>

Congregational Leadership Meeting, May 7

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6rZg6QSkV4k&feature=youtu.be>

Clericus Summary Letter from the Bishop, April 28

https://episcopalcolorado.org/wpcontent/uploads/2020/04/Clericus_Summary_Letter_from_the_Bishop.pdf

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry's Word to the Church: On Our Theology of Worship, March 31

<https://episcopalchurch.org/posts/publicaffairs/presiding-bishop-michael-currys-word-church-our-theology-worship>

CDC Cleaning and Disinfecting: Plan, Prepare, and Respond

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/clean-disinfect/index.html>

A Conversation: What Do Science and Data Say About the Near Term Future of Singing

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DFI3GsVzj6Q>

Germany to set out rules for religious services including singing ban

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/29/germany-to-set-out-rules-for-religious-services-including-singing-ban>

Canon Conversations, Episode 5: Liturgy and Worship during COVID-19

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fe355rt9iQo&t=18s>



Community Covenant: A Season for Sacrificial Love

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven. Ecclesiastes 3:1

The season for entering our churches for small gatherings and worship is approaching. It will not happen in all places across Colorado at one time, but instead at different times and in different ways based on our multiple and widely varying contexts and rate of infections, hospitalizations, and deaths. These stark realities bring many questions.

How will we enter this new season? When can we return to the way things were before? If we test positive for the virus, what will we do?

This time of pandemic is like no other season in our lifetimes. We are being called to act in unfamiliar ways, staying home, distancing ourselves from others, wearing protective masks when we are in public places, and disclosing when we have been exposed to the virus. At first these new behaviors seem to fly in the face of our beliefs, yet upon deeper reflection, our actions can reflect the core values and beliefs of our Christian faith.

The Covenant we make at baptism expresses what it means to follow Christ and what it means to be a Christian. In the midst of these promises, we commit to live faithfully both inside and outside the church walls, seeking to serve all persons in Christian love:

Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?
I will, with God's help.

This will be a season that requires establishing and committing to a new covenant for each of our communities as we gather again in person. It is critical that clergy, parish leaders and community members all commit to a covenant that will demonstrate Christian love and care and provide for the health and safety of every person.

We covenant in community to take these selfless actions:

- We will wash our hands carefully and fully.
- We will enter our spaces with care and intention.
- We will keep the recommended safe distance from others.
- We will wear masks.
- If we test positive, we will not enter upon the church property for any reason and will disclose our test result to our clergy or parish leader so the church can provide assistance with quarantine, medical attention and take steps for the safety of the community.
- If a member of our household or family tests positive, or if we believe that we have been exposed to the virus, we will not enter upon the church property for any reason for at least 14 days.
- We will assist with compassionate contact tracing.



For us as Christians, washing our hands and wearing masks becomes acts of care and devotion. Our masks provide only limited protection to us, but much protection to others if we are unknowing asymptomatic carriers. In doing this, we are required to acknowledge two truths. First, that we live in community and Jesus commands love for our neighbor, sometimes above ourselves. Second, that we are not invulnerable and that "To dust we shall return." Our ultimate hope lies in God.

As we consider how we will gather together in person again, we realize our gathering will necessarily look different than it did before this season of pandemic. We now must remember and take care to protect every person present as well as everyone with whom they will have contact. There is no shame when we act from selfless love. We will do this out of the abundance of our Christian love and service as we commit ourselves to this community covenant.



Sample Survey (from St. Aidan's Church, Boulder)

A Few Questions about Congregational Well-Being

Our church has received guidance from the Diocese of Colorado to plan for different seasons of church in the COVID-19 pandemic. By seasons, we are referring to a plan for a gradual re-opening in which we adjust to our new normal. We would like to ask you a few short questions in order to support your spiritual well-being as best we can while making plans for these different seasons.

1. To what extent do you agree with the following statement?
Being physically in church is vital for my spiritual well-being even if it means returning with new practices including a limited number of congregants, social distancing, face masks, no communion, and no coffee hour.
[Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, Somewhat Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Hard to Say]
2. Would you be comfortable attending when our church begins to welcome larger groups for attendance?
[Very Comfortable, Somewhat Comfortable, Somewhat Uncomfortable, Very Uncomfortable, Hard to Say]
3. To what extent would you agree with the following statement?
I would support extending our season of online worship if church leadership decided that this is the safest way for our congregation to act in love.
[Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, Somewhat Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Hard to Say]
4. Would any of the activities below help support your spiritual well-being?
[List of options (randomize the order of options in the list if this is an online survey): online prayer group, online Bible studies, small in-person prayer group with social distancing, small in-person bible study with social distancing, regular phone calls, something else (with a fill in the blank option)]
5. Is there anything else you would like us to know?
[Open-ended response.]



Bible Studies

Bible Study I: Genesis 7:1-5, 11-18, 8:6-18, 9:8-13

Questions

1. What image in this story speaks to you most right now as a leader?
2. Describe the environment on the ark near day 40. How do you think Noah felt? What about the others on the boat?
3. How does Noah determine when it is safe to get off the ark? Do you think this was a wise decision? Why or why not?
4. What is this story saying to you right now?
5. What do you think this story is saying to your congregation?

Bible Study II: Isaiah 43: 14-19

Questions

1. What image in this passage speaks to you most right now as a leader?
2. What new thing is God doing in your midst right now?
3. What former things do you not need to remember? What does your congregation need to not let go of to embrace God's new thing?
4. What is this passage saying to you right now?
5. What do you think this passage is saying to your congregation?

Bible Study III: Amos 8: 1-6

Questions

1. What image in this passage speaks to you most right now as a leader?
2. How is your congregation serving those who are poor during this time?
3. How is your congregation working to create a more just society during this time?
4. What is this passage saying to you right now?
5. What do you think this passage is saying to your congregation?

Bible Study IV: Matthew 22: 34-40

Questions

1. What image in this passage speaks to you most right now as a leader?
2. What does it mean to love your neighbor in our current context? Has it changed?
3. How do you think the lawyer felt about Jesus' answer?
4. What is this story saying to you right now?
5. What do you think this story is saying to your congregation?



Template for Conversation with Office of the Bishop

Congregation Name _____

City or town _____

Leadership Team/Safety Team members:

Tell us about your discernment process:

What are your priorities at this moment?

What have you discerned is the best course of action for the immediate future?

How will you ensure your entire congregation is able to participate?

What safety measures have you put in place?

How will you ensure these safety measures are followed?

How do you plan to evaluate your plan?

Please submit to The Rev. Canon Alex Dyer, Canon to the Ordinary