

Directive # 5 Re: COVID – 19 Pandemic

(effective 26 May 2020)

DIRECTIVES FOR THE RE-OPENING OF CHURCHES AND THE RESUMPTION OF PUBLIC LITURGICAL SERVICES

This Directive constitutes the official policy of the Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Winnipeg, to which are obliged all clergy functioning in this Archeparchy together with all parishes, missions and faithful.

Prot. H/62/2020

Glory be to Jesus Christ! Слава Ісусу Христу!

To the Reverend Clergy, Religious Sisters and Laity of the Archeparchy of Winnipeg:

The Government of Manitoba recently announced the easing of restrictions due to the COVID-19 Pandemic and the gradual re-opening of businesses, places of employment and the resumption of various activities, which includes religious services.

As Churches prepare to resume public services, it is critical that we understand the potential for the spread of COVID-19 virus among our faithful and so take steps to minimize this risk especially among high risk members within our congregations.

The health and safety of everyone is at the heart of these directives. We must continue to take the needed precautions we have followed up to now, namely:

- follow public health measures;
- practice physical distancing and good hygiene;
- and continue acting responsibly.

Readying our Parishes for Re-opening

1. Pastors, in consultation with their Parish Pastoral Councils, parish staff and others concerned, must communicate clearly and effectively with their parishioners about their plans as to when and how they will be resuming public liturgical services.

2. Specifically, the communication should cover the following areas:
 - 2.1 How the parish will determine the maximum number of persons permitted by government restrictions to attend the Divine Liturgy and other liturgical services. As of May 22, this number is set at 25 persons inside (and 50 persons outside).
 - 2.2 How the parish will ensure physical distancing.
 - 2.3 The measures the parish will take to ensure proper sanitation.
3. The Divine Liturgy schedule, if altered to allow more time between services should be published.
4. No “drive in” or “parking lot” services are permitted.
5. An adequate stock of hand sanitizer and other cleaning supplies should be readily available at the time of re-opening.
6. **Social gatherings** before or after Church services (including coffee and lunch) are **not** to take place at this time. Meals, luncheons, Teas etc. are also **not** permitted at the present time.
7. If due to practical or other reasons a parish is unable to maintain strict social distancing and perform the cleaning requirements as indicated in these directives, the pastor must not celebrate the Divine Liturgy or any other public liturgical service until such time as the parish is able to do so.

Deciding whether to attend or not to attend Church services

8. The faithful continue to be **dispensed from attending** the Divine Liturgy at this time.
9. All those attending Church services do so **at their own risk**. It is important for individuals and families to take responsibility for protecting themselves and others.
10. Prior to attending liturgical services, the faithful should follow the self-assessment review used by health facilities and businesses before entering their premises.

11. The following must stay home for the sake of the wider community:
 - 11.1 Those with COVID-19 and those who live with someone with COVID-19.
 - 11.2 Those who have been exposed to someone with COVID-19.
 - 11.3 Anyone feeling sick with a cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose or sore throat, even if symptoms appear to be mild or resemble a cold.
 - 11.4 Anyone at high risk from COVID-19, for example, those with chronic medical conditions, especially with upper respiratory or flu-like symptoms.
 - 11.5 Those who have recently travelled outside of Canada.

12. The following are encouraged to stay home for the sake of the wider community:
 - 12.1 Those who live with someone with upper respiratory or flu-like symptoms.
 - 12.2 Those with underlying or compromised medical conditions, especially the elderly.
 - 12.3 Family members who live with the elderly or those who are at risk.

13. When at home, individuals and families are encouraged to follow the liturgical services on live-stream, or set aside some time to pray, read Sacred Scripture or some other spiritual reading.

14. Clergy (priests, deacons, subdeacons) and assistants (sacristans, altar servers, lectors, cantors) with a respiratory infection of any kind must not celebrate or participate in public Divine Liturgies, other sacramental or prayer services.

Determining the Maximum Person Limit

15. As of May 22, provincial government restrictions limit the number of persons at a gathering to no more than 25 individuals. Therefore, for our Divine Liturgy and any other liturgical services the number of participants is limited to 25 persons. Included in this number 25 are clergy, sacristans, altar servers, lectors, cantors and faithful. Due to size variations among churches, this limit is also calculated as one third of normal worship space, whichever is smaller, and whichever ensures that physical distancing of at least 2 metres (6 feet) will be maintained.

16. Do keep in mind that individuals found to be in violation of gathering restrictions can be subject to penalties, including a \$1,000 fine.
17. Additional Divine Liturgies may be scheduled with greater frequency to accommodate the spiritual needs of the faithful.
18. To ensure that the maximum of 25 persons is not exceeded at any time, the faithful must sign-up through email or by calling the parish office/priest or other designated number, indicating their wish to attend a particular Divine Liturgy or other liturgical services. They must receive confirmation before attending.
19. The faithful should not sign-up for more than one liturgical service until everyone who wishes to attend has had an opportunity to do so (*which might be every week, or even two or three weeks.*)
20. A list of attendees and their contact information must be maintained should someone test positive for COVID-19, thereby assisting public health officials with contact tracing and follow-up.

Physical distancing and seating

21. Except for members of the same **household**, physical distancing of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from another person must be maintained by everyone on church property, including within the church, the church vestibule and basement, on the church steps, in the parking lot, in the washrooms, etc.
22. Tape or rope can be used to close off 2 or 3 rows of seating (pews, chairs) to ensure social distancing.
23. Seating which cannot be used should be clearly marked.
24. Members of the same household may sit together in the same pew.
25. Infants and children should remain with their parents at all times.
26. When the faithful are required to stand in line, for example, to receive Holy Communion, go to confession, or use the washroom, tape can be placed on the floor to indicate proper spacing between persons as well as the flow of movement.

27. Clergy and assistants are to remain at least 2 metres (6 feet) from each other and from the congregation during the liturgical service.

Entering and Existing the Church

28. Entry to the church is provided through a single door of entry, taking into consideration access for the handicapped.
29. A separate point of exit is to be used, where possible. If the same door must be used for entry and exit and for the handicapped, the faithful must patiently wait for each other that proper social distancing is maintained at all times.
30. Entrance and exit doors should be propped open as people enter/exit, weather permitting, so that the faithful need not touch the doors or door handles.
31. The faithful are to be welcomed by a greeter/usher, who will:
 - 31.1 assist in staggering the time of their arrival and departures to ensure Physical distancing of at least 2 metres (6 feet);
 - 31.2 check their names off the list of confirmed attendees;
 - 31.3 remind them of the requirements for social distancing;
 - 31.4 remind them to sanitize their hands - on entry and exit to the church;
 - 31.5 remind the faithful that the veneration of icons, crosses, gospel book, etc., should be done without touching or kissing them.
32. Members of the same household may enter and exit together.
33. Once the **maximum number** of persons has been reached, additional people are **not** permitted to enter the church building.
34. People who simply show up must be turned away; however, they are to be informed of how they can register for another Divine Liturgy or liturgical service.
35. The greeter/usher will dismiss the faithful by rows at the end of the liturgical service.
36. There should be **no social gathering** after the liturgical services. The faithful should promptly leave the church and parking lot upon the completion of the services.

Use of face masks

37. The faithful may choose to wear face masks, however, it is not required if physical distancing is maintained at all times.

Singing in Church

38. Congregational and choral (choir) singing is a high-risk activity and is not permitted, since infected people can transmit the virus through their saliva or respiratory droplets.
39. Instead, the sung responses during liturgical services are to be carried out by a single cantor, while the faithful remain prayerfully silent. An assistant singer may help the cantor, maintaining physical distancing. The cantor and the assistant are to sing facing away from each other
40. A designated area should be set aside for the cantor and assistant, since singing tends to disperse droplets in a wider area than the spoken word.
41. Where the parish has chosen to **recite** the entire Divine Liturgy, the faithful **may actively participate** in the responses, while ensuring that social distancing is maintained.
42. Where the parish recites some parts of the Divine Liturgy and sings others, again, the sung parts are to be led by a single cantor (*and assistant*), while the faithful remain prayerfully silent.

Collection and Recording of Donations

43. Collection baskets must not be passed through the assembly person to person. Collection baskets with long handles may be used, by which only the usher handles the basket. Otherwise, free standing baskets should be provided at the front of the church for donations.

43.1 Those who record the collections must use disposable gloves. The recording of collections must be done in an area that ensures physical distancing. Once the donations have been processed and readied for deposit, all surfaces and equipment must be thoroughly sanitized.

Sign of Peace

44. Where it is the practice, the sign of peace before the Creed is to be done with a simple bow, refraining from any hand shaking or embracing.

Distribution of Holy Communion

45. The priest (and deacon) is to wash his hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer immediately before the preparation of the gifts of bread and wine prior to the celebration of the Divine Liturgy (*Proskomedía*). The chalice, discos and any other utensils are to be wiped clean with sanitizer at this time.
46. The priest prays the Rite of Preparation (*Proskomedía*) silently so that the possibility of droplets being dispersed by speaking is avoided. Alternatively, the priest is to wear a mask.
47. Once the gifts of bread and wine are transferred to the holy altar at the Great Entrance, they are to remain completely covered with the veils, so that droplets dispersed by the priest in speaking or singing are avoided.
48. The veils can be removed for the Words of Institution and Epiclesis, but then immediately covered again. The chalice and discos are **not** to be raised for the invocation: "Yours of Your own...".
49. The priest (and deacon) again is to wash his hands with hand sanitizer immediately before the fracture of the Lamb and the placing of the consecrated particles in the chalice for distribution to the faithful.
50. The priest (and deacon) is to receive the Divine Eucharist by *intinction*, that is, he dips the Body of Christ into the chalice, always being careful not to touch the precious Blood with his fingers. The clergy are not to drink from the chalice.
51. Only one priest should distribute Holy Communion to the faithful who approach, especially with the limited number of participants. In the end, that same priest should consume the sacred contents of the chalice and make the initial purification.
52. The priest is to wear a face mask when distributing Holy Communion.

53. In distributing Holy Communion to the faithful, the priest is to pray silently the usual prayer: "The servant of God partakes ...". In this way, the possibility of any droplets being dispersed by the priest onto the face of the communicant is avoided.
54. Holy Communion is to be distributed to the faithful at the usual time during the Divine Liturgy, and not at the end of the liturgy.
55. The Divine Eucharist is to be distributed with single-use disposable wooden spoons, which are to be burnt and properly disposed of after usage.
56. If the priest senses that he has inadvertently touched one of the communicants, he should pause, place the chalice on the tetrapod, and use hand sanitizer to cleanse his hands prior to continuing to distribute Holy Communion.
57. For people with celiac disease, a separate small chalice is to be prepared. The amount of wine used must be small enough for the communicant to drink it entirely.
58. Once everyone who wishes to approach to receive Holy Communion has done so, the priest then is to recite the Prayer of Spiritual Communion as not everyone may feel comfortable or safe in approaching to receive the Divine Eucharist at this time.
59. Before being used again, all sacred vessels are to be thoroughly cleansed and purified with soap and hot water.

Cleaning and Disinfecting the Church

60. Hand sanitizing should take place at the entrance of the church for those attending the Divine Liturgy and other liturgical services. Hand sanitizer must contain at least 60 % alcohol.
61. A bottle of hand sanitizer, touched by many, should not be used. Instead, use an automatic dispenser or have an usher/greeter spray the hands of those entering and exiting the church.
62. Holy water fonts are to remain empty, and removed where possible.

63. Personal protective practices are to be promoted (coughing and sneezing etiquette, hand hygiene.)
64. Increased frequency of cleaning the church should take place, including surfaces that are touched often, e.g. doors, railing, pews and chairs, common areas, bathrooms.
65. All Divine Liturgy books, hymnals, paper, and other items are to be removed from the seating for the protection of the participants. Faithful should be encouraged to bring their own copies of liturgy books or download the Divine Liturgy text on their mobile devices.
66. Individual church bulletins should not be distributed, unless they are handed out by an usher/greeter as parishioners exit the church.

Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals

67. The celebration of baptisms, weddings and funerals are permitted, while maintaining physical distancing and current limits of 25 persons (including the priest).
 - 67.1 Baptisms and Chrismation (Rites of Initiation) are to be celebrated outside the Divine Liturgy, so as to ensure minimal gathering and physical distancing.
 There should not be multiple candidates unless they are members of the same household. The priest should wear a mask.
 For the prayers of exorcism, the priest is not to breathe over the candidate, but rather wave his hand of even a chalice veil.
 Baptism by immersion is not permitted at this time.
 - 67.2 **Weddings** (Crownings) are permitted, maintaining physical distancing and the current limit of 25 persons. Additional persons are not to gather outside the church and wedding receptions are not to take place on church property.
 - 67.3 **Funerals** and Memorial Liturgies are permitted, maintaining physical distancing and the current limit of 25 persons. In lieu of reduced funeral liturgies and private burials, services open to the public can be planned for as commemorative liturgies at a later date. Public receptions following a funeral or memorial service are not to take place on church property.

67.4 **Grave side blessings** are permitted, while maintaining physical distancing and the current limit of 25 persons.

Ministry to the Sick and Shut-Ins

68. Ministry to the Sick and Shut-Ins continues but within the health directives of hospitals, health care facilities and private homes. While providing spiritual support to those in need, clergy are to avoid situations **where they too can become carriers** of the virus and thus **endanger others**. Precautions are to be taken when administering the Sacramental Mysteries of Holy Communion, Reconciliation and the Anointing of the Sick. Health restrictions may not permit the physical anointing, in which case as much of the prayer as possible should be prayed near the patient, even from behind a window. Be prepared to leave the oil swabs and texts you use in in the restricted area for disposal if so required.

Meetings of Parish Council and other Organizations

69. Meetings of the parish council and the finance council are permitted, while maintaining the precautions listed above.

70. There is to be no coffee or socializing after the meetings.

71. All other in-person meetings are not permitted at this time, including bible study groups, youth, UCWLC, UCBC, and Knights of Columbus. These groups should consider electronic meetings and communication.

Financial Support

At this critical time, your financial support is greatly appreciated. Our Archeparchy and parishes continue to incur expenses as we strive to fulfil the mission which the Lord has entrusted to the Church. If you are able, you may mail a donation directly to your parish.

Conclusion

As we continue to live through the challenging time of COVID-19 and with the restrictions on large gatherings and physical distancing, which follow from the pandemic, it is important that we be united in prayer, Christian solidarity and the practice of patience. This current set of Directives (#5), like the previous Directives, is based on the guidelines and restrictions from the province of Manitoba. With expected

ongoing changes in the government guidelines based on the changing pandemic situation, the Archeparchy will also continue to adjust these Directives. We give thanks to the Lord that our public liturgical and church life is slowly resuming, albeit with restrictions and measures we have previously not known. We look forward to the day when we will have unrestricted access to our churches, even though it may be to a different reality than we have been accustomed to in the past.

May the Good Lord continue to bless everyone, so that together we may come through this time of tribulation with renewed faith, unwavering hope and self-giving love.

Most Rev. Lawrence Huculak OSBM
Metropolitan

Attachments:

- 1) Prayers for Spiritual Communion
- 2) Parish Sign-In and Questionnaire
- 3) Cleaning and Disinfecting your premises