

COVID-19 Preparedness Plan for the Church of St. Paul

The Church of St. Paul is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for all who choose to worship or visit our church. To ensure we have as safe and healthy church in which to worship our good Lord, we have developed the following COVID-19 Preparedness Plan in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We are all responsible for implementing this plan.

Our goal is to mitigate the potential for transmission of COVID-19 in our communities, and that requires full cooperation among our priests, parishioners and employees. Only through this cooperative effort can we establish and maintain the safety and health of all persons in our church.

Since we are all responsible for implementing and complying with all aspects of this COVID-19 Preparedness Plan, I encourage you to ask questions, raise health concerns and offer suggestions related to the plan and its implementation.

The opportunity to worship God is one of our most treasured expressions of our Faith. At the same time, we are serious about safety and health and keeping our parishioners and employees healthy. Your involvement is essential in developing and implementing a successful COVID-19 Preparedness Plan. Recommendations from the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis and several parishioners have been considered in this process. Furthermore, our COVID-19 Preparedness Plan follows State of Minnesota Industry Guidance for our business, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Guidelines, federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards related to safety and health precautions required in response to COVID-19 and applicable executive orders. The plan addresses the following:

1. policies ensure sick parishioners or those who may be sick stay home;
2. implementation of controls for physical distancing;
3. parishioner hygiene and source controls;
4. church building and ventilation protocols;
5. cleaning and disinfecting protocols;
6. communication protocols;
7. training and supervision practices and protocols;
8. what parishioners can do to minimize transmission;
9. protections and protocols for managing occupancy;
10. protection and protocols for distancing and barriers.

1. Policies to ensure sick parishioners or those who may be sick stay home

Parishioners have been informed of and encouraged to self-monitor for signs and symptoms of COVID-19. Anyone who is experiencing symptoms or has tested positive for COVID-19 is to stay home. Anyone who is a member of a household with a positive test for COVID-19 is to stay home. Furthermore, no parishioner is obligated to attend Holy Mass at this time.

2. Physical distancing – maintaining six feet of distancing

Physical distancing of six feet will be implemented and maintained between households. Parishioners are asked to self regulate this practice when entering, while in and upon leaving the church.

3. Parishioner hygiene and source controls

Parishioner hygiene and source controls are being implemented at our church. Hand sanitizer, sanitizer wipes and sinks for washing of hands are available at entrances of the church and within the church. The use of masks is encouraged.

Persons over age 65 and those with preexisting health conditions should continue to stay home during Phase II and avoid public gatherings, including in church.

All the faithful should continue to follow hygienic practices at home: wash hands often, avoid touching the face, cover coughs and sneezes, etc.

4. Church building and ventilation protocols

Whenever possible, windows will be opened and fresh air movement will be allowed while people are in the building.

5. Church cleaning and disinfection protocols

Regular housekeeping practices are implemented, including routine sanitizing of the church and frequent sanitizing of high-touch areas. Areas used in the church will be sanitized between liturgies. Parishioners are encouraged to assist with sanitizing surfaces after use.

6. Communication protocols

This COVID-19 Preparedness Plan was communicated via email to parishioners and put on our parish website on May 26, 2020. Training was provided. The Pastor, employees and volunteers will assist with monitoring how effective the program has been implemented as we are proceeding and after each weekend. All are to proceed through this new program together and work with the Pastor to update training as necessary. This COVID-19 Preparedness Plan has been certified by the Pastor of the Church St. Michael and was posted in the church on May 26, 2020. It will be updated as necessary.

7. What we all can do to minimize transmission of COVID-19

All the faithful should continue to follow hygienic practices at home: wash hands often, avoid touching the face, cover coughs and sneezes, etc.

Each person must remain 6 feet away in all directions from others not in the same household. Use hand sanitizer provided in the church or your own.

Parishioners should be encouraged to use the restroom at home before coming to church.

Parishioners are encouraged to wear masks.

8. Additional protections and protocols for Holy Communion

The faithful are urged to approach the reception of our Lord Jesus, truly present in the Holy Eucharist with reverence and recollection.

Communicants are encouraged to receive Holy Communion in the hand.

If a parishioner desires to receive Holy Communion on the tongue, it is possible. Please indicate or communicate with the Pastor your desire.

When Holy Communion is offered, the minister holds up the host and (through the face mask) says, "The Body of Christ." The communicant, wearing a face mask, replies, "Amen." The communicant removes the face mask to receive.

When receiving in the hand, the distributor and the communicant should extend hands to keep as much distance as possible between them and keep hands still to avoid inadvertent touching.

The faithful can apply hand sanitizer in the Holy Communion line before approaching the Holy Communion station, keeping 6 feet from those of another household; observe the floor markers. Once the person ahead has received, the next communicant approaches.

When receiving in the hand, the communicant extends both hands far in front of the body, hands held flat with palms upward, the left hand on top and the right beneath it (left-handed persons may reverse hands).

If receiving on the tongue, avoid taking in or exhaling a breath during the moment before and after receiving Holy Communion.

If while distributing Communion a minister touches a communicant, immediately after distributing to that communicant the minister puts the ciborium on the table and re-sanitizes hands before distributing to the next communicant. After receiving, communicants may depart immediately, or pray a few minutes in church in gratitude for the Eucharist, then depart at leisure.

No gloves may be worn when distributing or receiving Holy Communion. No one is obligated to receive Holy Communion. One may make a Spiritual Communion.

9. Additional protections and protocols for managing occupancy

Attendance at public Holy Masses is limited to 25% of church seating capacity as approved by the local fire chief. Parishioners will be asked to communicate with the parish office or Pastor regarding attendance.

Ushers will assist with managing households or individuals attending to assure appropriate distance and seating occupancy.

10. Additional protections and protocols to limit face-to-face interactions

Entrance and exits will be designated or persons will enter or leave without closely passing each other.

11. Additional protection and protocols for distancing and barriers

Altar servers will be used only when necessary. They are to practice the proper physical distancing.

Cantors are to be 12 feet apart.

We are all needed to help maintain a healthy environment to offer public worship to our good Lord. Let us continue to pray to the Holy Spirit for guidance and peace in the midst of our current circumstances!

Certified by:
Fr. Randal Kasel
Pastor