

## On Being Faithful

*Guidelines for a Shared Discernment on the Way Ahead  
in this Season of COVID-19*

*But now thus says the Lord,  
he who created you, O Jacob,  
he who formed you, O Israel:  
Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;  
I have called you by name, you are mine.  
For I am the Lord your God,  
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.  
Do not remember the former things,  
or consider the things of old.  
I am about to do a new thing;  
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?  
I will make a way in the wilderness  
and rivers in the desert.*

*[Isaiah 43:1,3,18-19]*

### Preface

Little did we know when the forty days of Lent began, that we would end the season in quarantine, either self-imposed, as if in a kind of strict Lenten fast, or enforced by guidelines promoted to protect public health and safety. From the forty (Latin: *quaranta*) days of Lent we have passed through the remembrance of Christ's saving death and glorious resurrection into the fifty days of the Easter season, sure that Jesus Christ is risen, but still wondering when it might be safe for us to emerge from our own 'tombs' into the light of a new day. The new day has come, but we would do well to acknowledge that it is of a different kind and order, and one which no longer holds any certainty in this COVID-19 world.

In this unwelcome season of the COVID-19 virus, we find ourselves living through a period of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity, or, for short, a VUCA season. During the fifty days between Easter and Pentecost, Jesus's disciples at first quarantined themselves in fear for their own safety, bewildered and confused, and yet were sustained and encouraged by the fleeting appearances of the risen Christ in their midst and the hope of new possibilities and opportunities for them and their world. As it happens, the last day of this month will also mark

for us the end of the Easter season, with the celebration of the feast of Pentecost, forty plus ten, days after Christ burst the tomb. The gift of the Spirit on that first Pentecost empowered the disciples for new ministry and mission to a broken and wounded world. It marked the beginning of a new season for ministry and an emerging Church. The gift of the Spirit endowed the disciples with fresh vision, understanding, clarity, and agility (VUCA) for leaning into uncertainty, but also with real clarity about the work that lay ahead.

Science, and the wisdom of public health officials, confirms the foolishness of even daring to predict when the virus will finally pass and when the global population may safely resume the habits and practices of the season we abandoned before the coronavirus disrupted the way we were living. If little else, we surely recognize now that we will not simply pick up where we left off, and that applies as much to our habits and practice of Christian witness and our gatherings for worship, formation, and fellowship, as it does to the pattern of daily life in the world beyond the doors of our buildings that have been long closed – although the Church of God has remained open throughout as a faithful witness to God’s love and compassion in this season of uncertainty.

Even so, the clamor to open the doors at every level of communal life, religious and secular, grows louder and more insistent. The science and health professionals, and the politicians, have given us a set of criteria by which to begin to re-emerge, re-enter, and re-gather in our work places, public spaces, and familial communities. *On Being Faithful* is the fruit of careful research and wide consultation, and is grounded in the best available data and professional advice. *On Being Faithful* provides each of our congregations, schools, and special ministries clear guidance and direction for how we in this diocese may begin to move forward as a witness to the forming of new habits and practices by which to live courageously and faithfully into the new season that is now unfolding before us. It adapts the familiar pattern and rhythm of liturgical seasons, laying out the unfamiliar and unpredictable season(s) that lie ahead and how we shall faithfully observe them as a diocese. It invites each of us to be adaptive and to live into our new circumstances in creative and imaginative ways that build on our experience and learning from the first two seasons of our quarantine.

*On Being Faithful* embraces the key issues of effective communication, subsidiarity, sustainability, liability, and advocacy – issues that are best summarized, if not better articulated and incarnated, under the umbrella of accountability. As the community of faith in Southeast Florida we are called to love the God who has created us in God’s image to become God’s likeness, incarnated in the human face of Jesus, who commands us to love God and our neighbor, both the one we see and more importantly the one we cannot see. Distracted by the deadly virus, we may have lost sight of the fact that we are this year marking the 50<sup>th</sup>

anniversary of the establishment of our diocese under the banner of *One Spirit, Many Faces*. This almost forgotten celebration invites us to renewed and revitalized ministries and mission for new and what are now significantly altered circumstances, to courageous witness in the face of all that feels counter-intuitive, and to a new and mutual accountability which affirms that under God we are *One Spirit, Many Faces*.

## Introduction

We are living in a defining season in the life of the human community, unprecedented in our lifetime. The Church is caught up in this season, too, and we are called to active response. This is a season of pain, loss, and grief that brings a measure of fear and uncertainty. It is also a season for creativity, renewed vision for mission, and discovery that has brought fresh energy to many of our communities. So many of our leaders have stepped forward as beacons of light and grace for our people in our congregations, schools, and special ministries. We have seen so much thoughtful and committed response to ensure that the mission of the Church continues during this time.

From the beginning of creation it has been so. Time moves forward and life is forever changed. The history of salvation has turned on defining moments for God's people: the rebuilding of the human family after the Flood; the journey of Abraham to the promised land; the freeing of Israel out of Egypt; the destruction of the Temple, the exile, and the return from Babylon. And most significantly of all, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

As it was for our forebears in the faith, so it is for us. Our common life today is different from what it was yesterday. Our daily living always has the opportunity for courageous change, and this moment awakens us to discover God's surprising resiliency within us. The resurrection of Jesus means that we can never "go back" to what was before; Jesus is always going on before us into God's future.

*This document has been prepared on the basic moral and theological principle of promoting the dignity and well-being of the human person and the human community, as they are articulated in our Baptismal Covenant and in the more general moral tradition of the Church. As a fundamental principle all discernment in this and the seasons before us will be conducted on the basis of numbers and facts (data) through this moral and theological lens.*

This document serves three purposes:

1. To offer hope to our communities in this uncertain time.
2. To help us think through how we can imagine gathering together again in our church buildings, and

3. To provide a resource for thinking through impacts to budgets caused by this COVID-19 time and to assess where we are with our budgets in anticipation of changes that will need to be made.

“God has a mission and God’s mission has a church.” It is time for us to meet this time of uncertainty with clarity and resolve. You have been successful at advancing mission in this COVID-19 season. A helpful way to think about what we are called to do comes from Bob Johansen, who for 30 years has worked with organizations on paradigms for shaping their futures. He has written about being prepared for a VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous) world.

Think of it. As we have done in times of natural disasters such as hurricanes, we have learned to adapt. In this season we have now turned on a dime and gone virtual. Such a nimble response is essential in times of disaster and crisis. In the case of this season, however, some of our adaptations will become permanent. Virtual gathering is a practice that we shall want to continue even as we come physically closer and the present crisis has ended. It allows so many more people to participate in our common life.

Many have gone to online platforms for giving. This too brings us into the future. We are adapting and in eight weeks we have moved faster than we have in years. We have multiplied the ways we connect and keep in touch. These are lessons for us to hold onto as we enter the next stage of our leadership journey.

We also need to remember that in the age of VUCA, there is a distinct difference between *certainty* and *clarity*. Clarity is always more important, especially in times like this when certainty is not possible. In the work that follows what we are attempting to do together is imagine how to bring Vision, Understanding, Clarity, and Agility to our understanding of *how we shall gather in the future, and how we shall be strategic and practical about our finances*. There is no doubt that the decisions that face us will be as challenging as we have ever had to meet, and yet our mission will guide us and we shall help one another as we move forward. Our unity of purpose is both essential and critical.

The virus is not going away, nor can we be certain that we shall be able to move ahead in an uninterrupted straight line. We have to find clarity of action in a world of mitigation in which local contexts and some of our congregations, schools, and special ministries, having resumed some in-person activities, may have to move *back into stay-at-home protocols* and *out of stay-at-home protocols* through the phases at any time. We also have to find clarity about how to manage our finances through these seasons.

The Bishop’s Pastoral Message of April 23<sup>rd</sup> stated the last set of guidelines. In this document, we are going to move to a phased approach of four seasons in order to imagine re-entry and

we are going to move to a shared process to help us discern the budgetary challenges. While this document will focus primarily on congregational life, the general principles apply to all our ministries.

Cities and churches phased rather quickly into “stay at home – work safe” measures. Yet we shall re-enter in deliberate seasons as guided by the best available data from our scientists and public health officials. Many of us have already spent considerable time in our ministries creating budgets for this year and next year. These budgets now require some rather quick, yet very thoughtful, adjustments.

This material will outline how we can reason together about gathering in the months to come. Presently, we are gathering virtually. We aim to create some space for creativity about how we move to gathering physically in offices, buildings, schools, and churches, including gatherings for in-person worship, while being aware that “pop-up mitigation” (that is, the immediate return to closure or other emergency measures) may occur during the rest of the pandemic. *This is a working plan for the foreseeable future based on what our medical officials are telling us.* Also, this material will outline how we can examine our budgets and plan for the future. Included is a congregational survey that we ask each of you to complete so that we can gain a full picture of the financial condition of our congregations across the diocese.

This material is provided to help us to begin to imagine together how to gather and how to plan for the future. It is an invitation to envision the next steps in our learning process about mission, how to gather, how to budget, and how we can share the Gospel in this unprecedented time.<sup>1</sup> This will be another chapter in our adaptive work and capacity building not just to prepare us for future disaster and crisis work, but to be able to take advantage of new ministry opportunities. The skills learned here are the adaptive tools for our future mission.

## THE KEY ISSUES FOR RE-ENTRY

**COMMUNICATION:** During this COVID-19 time, it is crucial that we communicate with our congregational leaders, members, staffs, fellow clergy and the Bishop and the Bishop’s office with intentionality. Over-communication, actually, might be our best practice. It is a two-way street and we must honor the need for each other to have as much information as possible during this time.

**SUBSIDIARITY:** This means that best practice is making as many decisions as possible at the local level. Because this virus is impacting us differently from area to area, proper decisions must take into account their own contexts. This does not mean, however, that we go about this decision-making alone. Collaboration is critical and an absolute necessity during anxious times about the very important decisions we will be facing.

**SUSTAINABILITY:** We shall be called to engage in a number of actions for the health and safety of our congregations. In order to do so, we are called to reach out to provide assistance and resources to one another so that we are truly able to move through each season of re-entry

together.

**LIABILITY:** Let us be ever cognizant that the decisions we will be making are indeed matters of life and death. Every step we take toward re-entering our buildings is fraught with liability; we are the stewards on the front line of the health and safety of our congregations.

**ACCOUNTABILITY:** We are accountable to each other in all ways, always. Especially at this time, we are accountable to one another in following diligently the guidelines set forth in this document and those mandated by our health care officials and government leaders. We must be consistent for the sake of each other's leadership and for our own public witness.

**ADVOCACY:** The Church has always had an important public voice. Now is the time to exercise our voices, individually and collectively, for the sake of those most vulnerable and in great need.

These key issues are the work of courageous leadership in a time of uncertainty and a witness to our faithfulness to the commandments to love God and our neighbor, whom we both see and cannot see.

## KEY TERMS

*(used throughout this document)*

**Contact tracing** – *the process of identification of persons who may have come into contact with an infected person and subsequent collection of further information about these contacts.*

**Immunity** – *the ability of an organism to resist a particular infection.*

**Mitigation** – *the action of reducing the severity or spread of the virus to reduce loss of life and properly lessen the impacts of the virus.*

**Testing** – *testing is undertaken to determine how much of the population has been infected with the virus that causes COVID-19*

**Therapeutic treatment** – *these are medical treatments (such as drugs) that can help lessen the symptoms of the virus.*

**Vaccine** – *a vaccine is usually an administered shot or nasal inhalant that stimulates your immune system to produce antibodies that fight off a virus and resist infection.*

## Part 1. The Seasons of this Pandemic Response

### Season One. Phasing of our Gathering

Why a season approach to re-entry?

A season approach provides a vision for:

- Imagination about our future
- Helps our people understand the reality of our situation
- Begins to put into place adaptive mission options
- Creates agility across the different areas and contexts of our diocese

We entered the current stay-at-home season (globally, nationally, and locally) in a phased approach. It feels as though we entered it all at once, but we did not. We saw the virus move through phases of initial contagion, then to rapid community spread. Likewise, we saw churches, schools, and special ministries move through phases of instruction: washing hands, no physical sharing of the Peace, no shared Chalice, physical distancing, moving to on-line platforms. Then from large event cancellation, to gatherings of less than 200, to less than 100, to less than 50, to less than 10 people, to only 2-3 people.

Ed Yong in *The Atlantic* describes the VUCA reality of our current crisis this way:

“The only viable endgame is to play whack-a-mole with the coronavirus, suppressing it until a vaccine can be produced. With luck, that will take 18 to 24 months. During that time, new outbreaks will probably arise. Much about that period is unclear, but the dozens of experts whom I have interviewed agree that life as most people knew it cannot fully return. “I think people haven’t understood that this isn’t about the next couple of weeks,” said Michael Osterholm, an infectious-disease epidemiologist at the University of Minnesota. “This is about the next two years.”

The pandemic is not a hurricane or a wildfire. It is not [comparable to Pearl Harbor or 9/11](#). Such disasters are confined in time and space. The SARS-CoV-2 virus will linger through the year and across the world. “Everyone wants to know when this will end,” said Devi Sridhar, a public-health expert at the University of Edinburgh. “That’s not the right question. The right question is: How do we continue?”

*Ed Yong, science writer for the Atlantic*<sup>i</sup>

Reading the findings of numerous papers from Johns Hopkins University, Imperial College, London, the CDC, the WHO, and the science arm of the American Enterprise Institute (which used leading epidemiologists to construct their best practice paper for getting back to work and reopening), it becomes obvious that we shall most likely experience a staged re-entry into the full range of public life. The question then before us is: “How do we continue living with this virus?” or “How do we guide our congregations, schools, and special ministries through the seasons of re-entry?”

Health professionals are speaking about several phases of stemming the effects of a pandemic and living with its impact. For our purposes, we are going to speak of seasons, as this is a concept familiar to us from our liturgical life. Season I is oriented around the work of slowing

the spread. Season II includes lifting of “stay at home – work safe” protocols while still prohibiting large groups. Season III is about returning to work and a regularity of public life. Season IV is the work of preparing for future pandemics.<sup>iii</sup>

There are numerous reports that provide the background for these seasons as they pertain to the work of civic and health leadership within the context of federal and local government. This document is focused upon each phase of the work as it applies to congregations and other institutions of the diocese. Fires, tornadoes, hurricanes, shootings, and trauma of every kind have taught us that recovery has seasons. Grief has phases or seasons. Growth and life have seasons. We also know that such seasons can be fluid, and may return. Our work here is to lean into the clarity of a seasons approach rather than the certainty of a date approach.

Before us is the work of adaptation from leading infectious disease specialists, epidemiologists, and outbreak scientists: Scott Gottlieb, Caitlin Rivers, Mark McClellan, Lauren Silvis, and Crystal Watson. "National Coronavirus Response: A Roadmap to Reopening."<sup>iv</sup> Their scientific approach to defeating the disease offers insight into how we can imagine re-entry.

We are in a unique position in our diocese to do good. We have been through disasters before. We have weathered them and we have flourished. This document puts together the best of what we know from our own experience and from thought leaders in the field.

Every congregation is required to form a Re-entry Planning Committee (which may be the Vestry or the Bishop’s Committee with additional ad hoc membership, or a separate group), and schools and special ministries are encouraged to form such discernment committees of leaders whose sole task is to be focused on this process of re-entry. The names, cell phone numbers, and email addresses of the Re-entry Planning Committee are to be sent to the Bishop’s Office as soon as possible.

*The following multi-season plan contains practices for how we will undertake re-entry. **The way forward will not be immediate and may not be linear.** It is through a faithful balance of science and pastoral care that we will respond accordingly.*

***We recognize that all ministry is contextual. The guidelines articulate practices that fall into categories of “requirement” and “recommendation.” Requirements are mandatory and enforceable by the Bishop and are listed using phrases “must....” and “...are prohibited.” Recommendations using the phrase, “we advise,” are best practices and may be modified as appropriate to your local context under the authority of the vestry and/or clergy leadership.***

For the entire diocese, including our congregations, schools, special ministries, and the Bishop’s Office, an overview of the Seasons looks like this:

[Season I – Virtual Worship and Gatherings](#)



[Season I Health Characteristics](#)  
[Season I Church Protocols](#)

[Season II – Return to offices and continued mitigation](#)

[Season II Health Characteristics](#)  
[Season II Church Protocols](#)  
[Churches of 50 ASA or Smaller](#)  
[Churches of 50 ASA or Larger](#)  
[Summer Programs and Vacation Bible School](#)  
[Parish Schools and Day Schools](#)

[Season III – Lifting of all physical distancing with protection](#)

[Season III Health Characteristics](#)  
[Season III Church Protocols](#)

[Season IV – Application of learnings and preparation for future](#)

[Conclusion](#)

[Appendix](#)

[Season II Questions](#)  
[Season II Office Guidelines](#)  
[Season II Worship Guidelines at Church](#)  
[Season II Home Worship Guidelines](#)  
[Season II Questions](#)  
[Season II Youth and Summer Program Guidelines](#)  
[Seasons I and II Service Guidelines](#)  
[Season II Re-Entry Checklist](#)

[Budget and Financial Considerations](#)

[Vestry Discussion Questions](#)  
[Budget Questionnaire](#)

[For Further Reading](#)

[Endnotes](#)

Season I – “Stay at Home – Work Safe” – Virtual Worship and Gatherings  
We are currently in Phase I.

*Season I Health Characteristics*

In Season I the following health-oriented characteristics may look and sound like the following:

- Widespread community spread of the virus
- Overtaxed health system
- Short medical supply
- Lack of availability of virus testing and contact tracing
- Lack of availability of vaccine, therapeutics, and counter measures
- Lack of protective supplies for general public

### *Season I Congregation Protocols*

At the Bishop's direction we are participating in efforts to slow the spread of the pandemic by agreeing to "stay at home – work safe" protocols.

- Congregations are doing virtual worship.
- We are holding bible studies and group ministry on-line.
- We are limiting service ministries to safe protocols dedicated to essentials: pastoral calls by telephone or zoom, mail service for the homeless, food provision, health-related ministries.

During this season we have successfully moved to virtual worship and gathering as well as distance pastoral care. We are undertaking the mission and business of the Church. We have created and provided guidelines that include resources for worship, pastoral care, and service.

We have seen tremendous creativity and ingenuity in so many of our congregations and schools which have allowed us to live the Gospel in so many new ways. We can apply the same creativity and ingenuity to the next phase of our work.

Crucially, we must prepare ourselves for the reality that we shall not move into Season II together at the same time. Our diocese covers a large and diverse region of the state and we shall be living different realities in different places at the same time. What may be right in Key West may not fit what is right in Jensen Beach. Just as we saw different parts of the diocese experience the beginning of this crisis at different moments, we can expect the same gradual progression as we move ahead. This will require a collaborative approach between deaneries and the Bishop's Office. Look to your Deans and the Bishop's Office for guidance on when you and your congregation, school, or special ministry can move on to Season II. We are here to help you in this discernment.

### *Season II – Return to Offices and Continued Mitigation*

Not unlike Season I, this season also has health characteristics. These have to do with both preventative measures, as well as guiding principles for returning to *measured* public life.

### *Season II Health Characteristics*

We shall know we are entering Season II when some or all of the following begin to happen as provided by our national government guidelines for re-opening:

- A sustained reduction in cases for at least 14 days
- Local hospitals are safely able to treat all patients requiring hospitalization without resorting to crisis standards of care<sup>v</sup>
- The city or state is testing all people with COVID-19 symptoms.<sup>vi</sup> Though recommended by all epidemiologists, this is unlikely to happen due to a difference in government vs health protocols.
- The state is able to conduct active monitoring of confirmed cases and their contacts.<sup>vii</sup>
- The state is able to implement case-based interventions, including quarantine while waiting for results, traced relationships over 14 days, and quarantine for close contacts accompanied by diagnostic testing.

Overall, we may see local and state officials allow the public to move to Season II when “Slow the Spread” reveals a minimum and sustained reduction in cases for at least 14 days.<sup>viii</sup> We may see state and local governments re-open ahead of the federal government guidelines. This may cause confusion. But we must be clear about the life and death nature of our decisions, and we shall follow the safest course that health officials advise. Where can you find or discover local health officials, public officials, and county health voices near you? Having this information for discernment with your Deans and the Bishop’s Office will be important.

People are eager to move to Season II, but this protocol reveals the longer tail of the impact of a pandemic. We must be steadfast in our commitment to safety. This is why the dates keep moving.

Cultural norms that we shall hear during this season will mirror the advice above and include the acceleration of vaccine creation<sup>ix</sup>; therapeutic treatments; prophylaxis for those exposed to infection to prevent them from developing disease or reduce its severity; and increased availability of serology testing (to identify immunity in individuals). This last ability is as essential to our efforts to heal as testing for the virus because it will enable us to understand if we are immune after having the virus and/or if some individuals are immune.<sup>x</sup>

It is possible, as local communities move to negative community spread, that they will return to more open public interaction. At this time, limitations on gatherings may be lifted, wearing masks may not be necessary, and temperature checks may no longer be required.

Predictions of civic leaders in the largest cities and across the state imagine that we shall be entering Season II. However, public health leaders and federal government guidelines remind us that we cannot enter Season II until at least the requirement of 14 days of continuous reduction in community spread has been achieved.

In Season II we believe “stay at home – work safe” measures will end. We can expect that “physical distancing” (6’–10’ spacing) will continue to be required. Why? ***Because asymptomatic people can pass the virus to others.*** Safe health protocols will remain in place, like, “teleworking (as much as possible), maintaining hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette, wearing a mask and gloves in public, regularly disinfecting high-touch surfaces, and initially limiting social gatherings to fewer than 10 and then 50 people.”<sup>xi</sup>

Please recognize that the Governor of Florida is making overall recommendations and that county and city officials will be directing local public protocols.

### *Season II Congregation Protocols*

The diocesan leadership will determine with the clergy and leaders of congregations, schools, and special ministries when and how gathering may happen. The Bishop will work with the Deans and others to protect the life of our community, parishioners, schools, and clergy. ***When the time comes, all in-person worship, Bible study, service, and gathering approaches must be approved by the Bishop.***

What may happen during this time period? We expect that a scalable approach will begin to happen: 10 people may gather, then 20 people may gather, then 50, then 100, and so on.

We expect that in Season II, with the approval of the Bishop, church offices may be re-entered based upon the actions of local civic leaders that are based on the best indications from public health officials. As this is a regional plan, we may re-enter our spaces by region and size. We shall make this decision through Deans and the Bishop’s Office and based upon local health and civic leader guidelines.

We know that having church buildings open at different stages in a season will be difficult. This is the challenge of having a large diocese over a number of counties and congregations in towns and communities of very different sizes.

As testing, treatments, and community spread data now varies from place to place within the diocese, we cannot expect to resume in-person worship together as one Local Church. Therefore, congregations will have to work with their Deans and the Bishop to identify the best time to move into Season II protocols using locally available data.

While the decision to move into Season II protocols will be determined by the leadership of the congregation/school/special ministry in consultation with the Bishop, neighboring congregations/schools/special ministries are encouraged to work with each other on discerning re-entering dates. This will be an important sign of unity, solidarity, and communication among the clergy and leaders of our diocese sharing in a common mission.

### *Congregations of 50 ASA or Smaller*

Once permission is given for gatherings to resume for groups of 50 people or less, we may begin to look at congregations who wish to resume in-person worship.

Congregations need to work with the Bishop to determine readiness for re-entry.

A list of guidelines and questions is provided in the Appendix. These questions should be answered and the congregation will need to be prepared to fulfill the expectations of the guidelines prior to returning to worship in the church building. *A Re-Entry Checklist is provided to help remind you of the steps requiring careful attention and consideration.*

Some church physical plants are too small to provide for in-person worship *and* the maintenance of physical distancing required in this season (see [Guidelines](#)). These congregations may need to worship in a parish hall or outside, in a space that is large enough to accommodate safe physical distancing.

***All worship, Bible study, service, and gatherings must be approved by the Bishop.***

The Deans and Bishop's Staff will help clergy and lay leaders of congregations prepare to answer the questions and follow the Guidelines.

### *Forewarning*

It is possible that after re-entry, a person may expose the congregation to the COVID-19 virus. If that happens those gathered will be asked to return to a 14-day quarantine and the congregation may have to return to virtual worship only during that period.

It is possible that after re-entry the community in which the congregation is located re-institutes "stay at home - work safe" measures of Season I. If this happens congregations that have been allowed to have in-person activity and worship will be expected to return to the use of virtual worship until their city or town returns to Season II status.

### *Churches of 50 ASA or Larger*

A number of our congregations have over 50 ASA. This means congregations of 50 or more have several choices.

The first choice is simply to continue to worship virtually until permission is given in general to gather in group sizes that match their own ASA. This could mean waiting a long time - even into the fall or winter, or longer for some of our congregations. The layered approach of 50, 100, 300, and 500+ will take months as Season II lingers.

The second choice is to figure out how to re-engage small groups and small group worship.

We advise imagining how you can gather in groups virtually, then move the groups of 10, then of 50 into house groups as the layering in Season II advances.

This may seem at first glance a very difficult challenge. But re-imagine it as an opportunity to renew relationships within your congregation. Allow for friends and neighbors to be invited and attend the house meetings. In other words, leave room for evangelism and mission to take root.

One idea might be, with the Bishop's approval, that a large congregation could invite 50 to worship together (following the Guidelines) and rotate parishioners through in-person worship over a month.

Whether an engagement of small group home-oriented worship, rotations of the community in worship in the church building itself, or a combination of the two, now is the time to be creative in how we might "stay safe, work safe, and worship safe."

***All worship, Bible study, service, and gatherings must be approved by the Bishop.***

The Deans and Bishop's Staff will help lay leaders of congregations and clergy prepare to answer the questions and follow the guidelines.

#### *Forewarning*

It is possible that after re-gathering, a person may expose the congregation to the COVID-19 virus. If that happens those gathered will be asked to return to a 14-day quarantine and the congregation may have to return to virtual worship only during that period.

It is possible that after re-gathering the community in which the congregation is located re-institutes "stay at home - work safe" measures of Season I. If this happens congregations that have been allowed to have in-person activity and worship will be asked to return to the use of virtual worship until their city or town returns to Season II.

#### *Summer Programs and Vacation Bible School*

There are a variety of considerations when approaching summer programs. The first consideration is the community's placement in either Season I or II. The second consideration is the Bishop's permission. The third is the parish priest and Vestry's permission. The program leaders need to work with the local priest and vestry to determine the feasibility of a program for this summer and how to apply the safety Guidelines to the ministry.

### *Parish Schools and Day Schools*

We believe these should follow state, FCIS, NAIS, and/or NAES guidelines for reopening and ought to be coordinated with priest and Vestry. Diocesan schools will follow similar protocols in consultation with the Bishop and the school board.

### *Season III – Lifting of all physical distancing with protection*

We shall slowly move into Season III as we enter negative community spread of the virus.

### *Season III Health Characteristics*

The authors of *Report 12 – The global impact of COVID-19 and strategies for mitigation and suppression* write:

“Moreover, suppression strategies will need to be maintained in some manner until vaccines or effective treatments become available to avoid the risk of later epidemics. Our analysis highlights the challenging decisions faced by all governments in the coming weeks and months, but demonstrates the extent to which rapid, decisive and collective action now could save millions of lives.”

The authors of *A Roadmap for Reopening* write:

“Phase II measures can be lifted when safe and effective tools for mitigating the risk of COVID-19 are available.”

We are looking for the following cultural road markers:

- Negative community spread
- Mass vaccination
- Mass therapeutic availability
- Mass testing for virus and immunity<sup>1</sup>
- Lifting of physical distancing
- Global vaccination

While Season III health characteristic have a much more global feel, we believe that giving signs of this particular health road are important. There will come a time when there is negative viral spread. There will come a time when we shall see the lifting of physical distancing. Testing of different types and vaccinations will become part of the narrative, perhaps by the end of 2021.

### *Season III Congregation Protocols*

Here we shall resume normal activities. It will be important for you as spiritual leaders to mark, bless, and celebrate each of these layered milestones along the way.

We are not sure when we shall enter Season III, but we do know that as we do we shall want to mark this liturgically and pastorally for our communities.

If we do this well, we believe that we shall emerge from the pandemic prepared for future disasters, but with the added benefit of missional learning.

- Church offices opened
  - Missional and administrative capacities created
- Worship in church buildings
  - Increased small group gathering
  - Increased missional gathering
  - Continued virtual worship provided
  - Continued virtual meeting provided
  - Continued pastoral calling
- Return to service ministries with addition of new community relationships

#### Season IV – Application of learnings and preparation for future

The health leaders understand Season IV as part of the ongoing preparation for future pandemics. It is difficult when one is in survival mode or even grief mode to prepare well. Nevertheless, in a VUCA environment we need to prepare for future outbreaks.

We have already begun the work of learning from this event as a Church. We want to apply our learning and prepare for future emergencies and pandemics. Likewise, what we learn now needs to be applied to mission in the present so that if we need such skills and competencies in the future we do not have to reinvent or re-learn them.

It is not too soon to build in structural platforms for livestreaming and uploading our worship services. We need to continue to create meetings and programs that are accessible online in real-time. Bible studies are a good example of this.

We also need to maintain across congregations and diocese up-to-date membership lists of phone numbers and email addresses. This enables churches and the diocese to work together in crisis and disaster communication.

We shall want to invest in technology that supports congregations in doing this ministry, including video and online giving platforms.

We also need to ensure that we become advocates for a US health system that is forever prepared to face new pandemics. This will mean advocating for “research and development initiatives, expansion of public-health and health care infrastructure and workforce, and clear governance structures to execute strong preparedness plans.”



## Conclusion

We are learning and re-learning how to become God's hands at work in the world at this moment. God's mission is our mission. We shall not fail to meet the challenge because we believe God has something to offer us in this moment. While we are looking at four Seasons that will last 18 months or so, we shall use the time wisely to learn new mission skills for our work in the future. We are becoming adept at ministering in crisis. Moreover, we are being molded into a Church that meets a world continuously in crisis with the Good News of God in Christ Jesus, his love, and his care.

We shall be required to manage carefully our financial and human resources so as to sustain our mission of evangelism and service. We need to lead with knowledge and information so as to help our congregations, schools, and special ministries and our people cope with the changing nature of the phased community approach. Together we as congregations, schools, and special ministries can help lead our communities through a pandemic or any emergent crisis. We can play our part in defeating this particular viral outbreak of COVID-19. Such leadership and adaptation now will be seeds to future mission success. Like many organisms strengthened by strain we will emerge and re-gather as a reimagined community.

## Gathering by Season Appendices

### *Season II Questions*

While guidance as to specific practices is given below, it is also important for each congregation, school, or ministry to engage with and consider practical questions in their own context, as follows:

Given what you have learned during the period of streaming worship, with more of an emphasis on non-Eucharistic worship, how will your worship be different? Will you continue to stream worship?

How will you encourage smaller group (less than 50 people) activities (such as virtual Bible studies, Sunday School, AA meetings, etc.) as a ramp-up strategy ahead of Sunday gatherings?

What practices of leading worship in this interim need to be passed on to lay people, so that congregational lay and clergy leadership can guide through Season II and III?

How many people can your worship space hold, with people wearing masks, in family groups sitting six feet apart?

How will you cap attendance at below 50 (say, 40 or so) so that there is room for members of the community to join you?

How will you limit the number of people serving in worship (such as lectors, acolytes, multiple clergy, etc.), so that more people may be able to attend?

How might congregation members invite others to join them in returning to worship?

How will you discourage the receiving line after church and/or gathering after worship and at other times?

How will greeters/ushers help to monitor adherence to attendance and other guidelines?  
How will they also model masking and physical distance?

If offering outdoor worship opportunities, how will you ensure safety which is equal to, or greater than, indoor worship?

Do you have the masks and cleaning supplies to clean/disinfect the common spaces?

How will you ensure cleanliness and sanitation in regard to the following items and spaces?

Worship leaflets/bulletins, Prayer Books, Hymnals

Areas where smaller groups gather during the week, such as for Sunday School, Bible studies, church office activities, playgrounds.

Physical items such as the altar, pulpit, lectern, kneelers, communion rail.

How will you ensure the sanitization and safety practices of the following people and activities?

Altar Guild

Nursery workers

Greeters/Ushers

Acolytes

Choir members

Money counters

Seniors and at-risk people.

Will you celebrate with a special first day back to worship liturgy? The Book of Occasional Services 2018 contains a liturgy, which may be adapted, called A Rite of Welcoming after a Traumatic Absence.

The Bishop's Staff can walk with you as you address these considerations and strategies, ensuring creativity and adaptation, with an eye to welcoming visitors and the surrounding community.

### *Season II Office Guidelines*

1. Be attentive and follow the gathering guidelines for your deanery/region.
2. Receive permission from the Bishop to open the office.
3. Clergy and staff should either have a molecular test done to see if they have the virus, or antibody test to see if they had the virus and now have immunity.
4. People will be required to wear fabric nonmedical face masks while in the community to reduce their risk of asymptomatic spread.
5. Surfaces that are frequently touched are cleaned/disinfected, such as shared desks, countertops, kitchen areas, electronics, and doorknobs.
6. We advise vulnerable populations of individuals “older than age 60 and those with compromised immune systems or compromised lung and heart function,” should continue to engage in physical distancing including “stay at home – work safe” protocols
7. Create an emergency plan for possible outbreak. You will need to close if someone in the office contracts COVID-19. And participants with proximity to the individual who is sick will have to be quarantined. Surfaces will have to be cleaned by an outside contractor.

### *Season II Worship Guidelines in Church Buildings*

All offices and in-church gatherings or service work re-enter during this time will have to follow these measures:

1. Be attentive and follow the gathering guidelines for your deanery/region.
2. Receive permission from the Bishop.
3. Encourage staff or community members to [protect their personal health](#).
4. Post the signs and [symptoms of COVID-19](#): fever, cough, shortness of breath.
5. Congregations will use thermometers to test participants for fever before entrance.
6. Clergy and congregation employees are tested for COVID-19, with negative results, if such testing is required by local civic leaders.
7. People will be required to wear fabric nonmedical face masks while in the community to reduce their risk of asymptomatic spread.
8. Surfaces that are frequently touched are cleaned/disinfected, such as shared desks, countertops, kitchen areas, electronics, and doorknobs.
9. Limit events and meetings that require close contact. In worship this means:
  - A. Holy Communion will be administered in One Kind only. There will be no sharing of the Chalice, and no intinction. The celebrant only may communicate from the Chalice.
  - B. Individual communion cups are not authorized for use in this diocese.
  - C. No physical passing of the Peace.
  - D. Arrangements must be made for “contactless offertory” so that offering plates or bags are not passed among worshippers.
10. Stay up to date on developments in your community.

11. Create an emergency plan for possible outbreak. You will need to close if someone contracts COVID-19. And participants with proximity to the individual who is sick will have to be quarantined. Surfaces will have to be cleaned by outside contractor.
12. Assess if community members are at higher risk and plan accordingly.<sup>xii</sup>
13. We would advise vulnerable populations of individuals “older than age 60 and those with compromised immune systems or compromised lung and heart function,” should continue to engage in physical distancing as much as possible until a vaccine is available, an effective treatment is available, or there is no longer community transmission.”<sup>xiii</sup>
14. Those who are sick will be asked to stay home and seek testing for COVID-19. Testing should become more widespread and routine. We shall want to pray for them and follow up, ensuring safe distancing and 14-day protocols prior to re-entering offices and gatherings.<sup>xiv</sup>

***Each congregation will need to receive permission from the Bishop to re-enter the office and to re-gather for Bible study or worship. Permission during Season III will also need to be sought to restart service ministries.***

#### *Season II Home Worship Guidelines*

1. Be attentive and follow the gathering guidelines for your deanery/region.
2. Receive permission from the Bishop.
3. Have a plan if guidelines allow 10, 50, or 100 to gather. How big is the program?
4. Encourage staff and participants to [protect their personal health](#).
5. You may use handheld thermometers to test participants for fever before entrance.
6. Clergy and congregation employees are tested for COVID-19, with negative results, if such testing is required by local civic leaders.
7. People will be required to wear fabric nonmedical face masks while in the community to reduce their risk of asymptomatic spread.
8. Surfaces that are frequently touched are cleaned/disinfected, such as shared desks, countertops, kitchen areas, electronics, and doorknobs.
9. Limit events and meetings that require close contact. This is problematic for home worship and must be considered.
10. Stay up to date on developments in your community.
11. Create an emergency plan for possible outbreak. You will need to close if someone contracts COVID-19. And participants with proximity to the individual who is sick will have to be quarantined. Surfaces will have to be cleaned by outside contractor.
12. Assess if community members are at higher risk and plan accordingly.<sup>xv</sup>
13. We do not recommend home worship gatherings for vulnerable populations. We would advise vulnerable populations of individuals “older than age 60 and those with compromised immune systems or compromised lung and heart function, should continue to engage in physical distancing as much as possible until a vaccine is

available, an effective treatment is available, or there is no longer community transmission.”<sup>xvi</sup>

14. Those who are sick will be asked to stay home and seek testing for COVID-19.<sup>xvii</sup>

15. If at any time a member of the worshipping group falls ill, then the whole group will need to quarantine for 14 days.

### *Phase II Youth and Summer Program Guidelines*

We recognize that summer is a time for youth programs of various types. These guidelines are presented to help the rector, vestry, and staff make the safest decisions for summer ministries.

1. Be attentive and follow the gathering guidelines for your deanery/region.
2. Receive permission from the bishop.
3. Have a plan if guidelines allow 10, 50, or 100 to gather. How big is the program.
4. Encourage staff and participants to [protect their personal health](#).
5. Clergy and congregation employees are tested for COVID-19, with negative results, if such testing is required by local civic leaders.
6. People will be required to wear fabric nonmedical face masks while in the community to reduce their risk of asymptomatic spread.
7. Surfaces that are frequently touched are cleaned/disinfected, such as shared desks, countertops, kitchen areas, electronics, and doorknobs.
8. Limit events and meetings that require close contact.
9. Stay up-to-date on developments in your community.
10. Create an emergency plan for possible outbreak. You will need to close if someone contracts COVID-19. And participants with proximity to the individual who is sick will have to be quarantined. Surfaces will have to be cleaned by outside contractor.
11. Assess if community members are at higher risk and plan accordingly.<sup>xviii</sup>
12. We would advise vulnerable populations of individuals “older than age 60 and those with compromised immune systems or compromised lung and heart function, should continue to engage in physical distancing as much as possible until a vaccine is available, an effective treatment is available, or there is no longer community transmission.”<sup>xix</sup>
13. Those who are sick will be asked to stay home and seek testing for COVID-19.<sup>xx</sup>
14. If the program is to do service please follow the service guidelines.

### *Season I and II Service Guidelines*

Outreach and service during this time come with risk. With community spread of the coronavirus, those who interact with others raise the risk of infection for themselves, members of their households, and those with whom they interact. The greater the number of contacts outside the household, the higher the risk potential, whether the number is in one event, or a collective number over time.

## **Principles to Guide Congregations wanting to serve during Stay at Home/Shelter in Place**

### **Follow all local guidelines**

Group size, social distancing, sanitation protocol, use of masks and Personal Protective Equipment, and at a minimum Essential Services requirements should all be followed.

### **Invest in the needs of the vulnerable, rather than in the felt needs of the Church**

As is always true, congregations should listen to the needs of their community, not just decide in a vacuum what is helpful. Congregations should take their lead from disaster coordination groups in their local communities, or from agencies like Episcopal Relief & Development, the United Way, the local food bank, or the local government and work on the highest needs in ways that enhance, rather than diminish, community health. For most members of our churches, that means that they should stay at home and not venture out to do good.

Understand that limiting the number of people engaging in higher-risk behavior (like leaving home to volunteer) serves to protect our health care professionals and vulnerable populations.

Service events or gatherings created by congregations to meet their members' desire to volunteer are not advised at this time.

As the stay at home orders are lifted or testing becomes more widespread, additional avenues to serve will develop.

### **Critical Needs Need Funds**

We have worked for years to turn congregations from giving money to engaging in action. For many of the most pressing needs and for many congregations, the best way to help right now is to collect and donate funds to agencies equipped to meet critical needs with the lowest risk to the greater community.

### **Who should be encouraged to serve?**

#### ***Outside the home:***

Only individuals who do not fall into categories with elevated risk of severe infections and who also do not live with anyone who fall into categories with elevated risk. Adult household members should be consulted to share in decisions about the types of interactions and risks to which other household members may expose themselves.

Children and teens have a difficult time with the protocols for social distancing and should therefore be considered at high risk of becoming infected and infecting others.

Service projects that bring children out of their households into the community with others should therefore be considered high risk.

### **What are the most pressing needs in the community?**

- Mental and emotional distress from social isolation
- Food access
- Blood supply
- Personal Protective Equipment
- Financial resources to cover rent, utilities, food, other household and personal care products, and medications
- Help for recently unemployed navigate through the unemployment process

### **How are these needs being addressed?**

**To get information about services, call local government offices and leaders. Partner with those who are or have developed safe processes to meet these needs.**

### **Food Access:**

In most communities and cities, some existing organizations are coordinating responses. Large food pantries, for instance, working with the local food banks, have developed protocols to provide food while reducing the risk of virus spread. This involves extensive sanitation procedures and the use of PPEs to protect staff and volunteers from each other and from the public they serve. Some of them need adult volunteers to assist with:

- Bringing empty boxes for packing groceries
- Packing boxes or bags for pick-up and delivery
- Placing boxes in cars and/or for pick up by walk up clients
- Driving boxes for delivery, especially to older and/or disabled adults
- Cleaning

Aside from volunteering, food banks need critical financial donations to pay staff and purchase food.

Public schools or community centers in many communities are also providing meals for children and youth.

### **Food access and delivery for homeless populations**

In some communities, organizations are preparing meals to deliver or hand out to homeless populations. Both the preparation and distribution of the food should be done through official channels, in which the safety protocols and the coverage of the needs are being assessed.

### **Blood and Platelet Supply**

Blood banks are holding blood drives in mobile units and in some facilities. Generally staff run, blood drives are in need of healthy adults to donate blood and platelets. All staff and those donating blood should be using masks and other protective gear and maintaining social distancing whenever possible. All blood drives should be appointment only, reducing waiting and interaction times.

### **Social Isolation and Mental Health**

Anxiety, loneliness, and feelings of being overwhelmed increase during crises. With requirements to stay at home or maintain physical distance, the frequency and risk from these realities multiply. These needs provide the greatest opportunity for local congregations. By investing efforts in coordination, coaching, and curiosity, congregations can support their members, their members' friends, parents of children who attend the congregation's school or daycare, and community servants and partners. Here are a few ways to help:

- Calls, emails, and texts are all entirely sanitary and free and are encouraged.
- Calls can be made by families with children to sing Happy Birthday to other members of the congregation, for instance.
- Find and publicize local county and state mental health resources and phone numbers.
- For members who are not comfortable with video technology, they can read one of the Daily Offices with them over the phone.
- Homework and home schooling help
- Virtual board game parties or other distractions to give parents space

### **Some best practices we follow**

Practice accountability when spending congregation funds. Keep a log. Keep receipts. Find someone who likes to keep track of the details and use a tracking system.

Practice volunteer etiquette. Respect the dignity of every human being. (Ask before taking a photo of a beneficiary. Consider taking photos that do not reveal the faces of those being served. And so on.)

When making check-in phone calls, take care not to over-promise. Prepare callers. The person describing his or her own needs may expect that something will come of the inquiry. Be clear about the objective of the phone call/inquiry with your callers. Parishioners who make pastoral calls should receive some training from their priest. Consider basic scripts as a framework for volunteers.



## SEASON II RE-ENTRY CHECKLIST

**This checklist is a tool for clergy and Vestry use in preparing to re-enter church buildings and resume in-person worship.**

*(Please remember that many of our congregations are composed of individuals that meet the description of vulnerable population. Re-entry to the church building might not be appropriate for every congregation.)*

**It is assumed that the Re-entry Planning Committee will be coordinating these efforts.**

### **Buildings**

The following building and office use guidelines must be followed:

- Congregations must deep clean the entire church building, including pews, bathrooms, doorknobs, light switches, stair railings, and microphones.
- Staff members working from church-owned buildings must continue to follow social distancing and sanitary guidelines
  - Maintaining six feet of separation between individuals
  - Regular hand washing and sanitizer use
  - Regular disinfection of common surfaces including door knobs, countertops, phone and office electronics
- Buildings must be thoroughly cleaned regularly and between user groups, especially high-touch surfaces.
- Creating an emergency plan for possible outbreak and how you might respond in care, communication, and in cleanliness.
- Maintaining a visitor log (phone numbers and email addresses) for all who enter the building in the event that they may come in contact with someone with the disease and reporting is required. This log must be thoroughly managed and checked daily.

The following building and office use guidelines are advised:

- Consideration of removing all non-essential items from rooms so that there are fewer surfaces to touch.
- Posting signs and making announcements about non-contact greetings and to refrain from shaking hands and hugging.
- Communicating with your congregation before they arrive about the preparations you have done for their re-entry.
- Communicating with your congregation that if they are sick or are of a vulnerable population, they should stay home and join on line.
- Staff members continue to be permitted to work from home.
- Keeping in-office functions as minimal as possible, only to ensure essential operations.

- Posting signs outlining COVID-19 symptoms and urging people to stay home/seek medical attention if they experience symptoms.
- Maintaining appropriate stocks of tissue, soap, hand sanitizer, and disposable towels for drying hands.
- Consider allowing building users/rental groups to return only on the condition that they are able to observe gathering limits and hygiene protocols.

### Worship

The following worship guidelines must be followed:

- All common surfaces must be cleaned before and after worship, including door knobs, countertops, pews, electronics, and sacramental items.
- Training of greeters and ushers to be “safety ministers” who are at the front door ensuring people are wearing masks, avoiding crowding and traffic bottlenecks; and are directing dismissal to avoid the same.
- Wearing of non-surgical masks is required. Please consider having a supply for those who arrive without one.
- No nursery or in-person Sunday school or coffee hour following the service.
- No physical contact during the passing of the peace.
- No passing of the offering plate through the pews.
- Households must sit at least six feet apart, 360 degrees
- Removal of prayer books, hymnals and bibles from pew racks; use of single-use bulletins (that are picked up rather than handed out) or sending a digital copy for people to access on their personal devices
- Developing a plan for dismissing congregants to ensure social distancing as people exit
- No receiving line following the service
- Develop a plan to reduce the number of doors that people must touch to enter and exit the service
- Maintain on line worship and formation programming (where it has been implemented prior to re-entry)
- Limit in-person events and meetings

The following worship use guidelines are advised:

- Multiple services with fewer attendees
- Having people sign up for services in advance
- Create and assign fixed seating to maintain safe distances
- Singing is among the riskier behaviors in spreading the virus – either refrain from singing or separate singers from one another and the congregation following distancing guidelines; use one singer/one musician to perform music

## Part 2. Budget Considerations

There is no doubt that this COVID-19 season has impacted the budgets of our congregations, schools, and special ministries. To the surprise of some, the impact has been positive, and their income has either increased, or not fallen off too much. Yet the overall impact has been a challenging one. This impact causes us as leaders to review all the assumptions and priorities on which our budgets were based until now. The most difficult aspect of leadership is making difficult decisions about limited resources.

There are two aspects to this section of the document:

1. A process by which to discuss financial decision-making and budgeting, and
2. A congregational survey intended to help us understanding the overall financial picture of our diocese in this moment of COVID-19.

It is a fact that budgeting is not only a practical process, but an emotional one. Because both are crucial components of any decision-making process, it is absolutely vital that we enter budget considerations and decision-making with equal care and attention to both of these aspects.

A recommended outline for Vestry discussion of the budget:

1. What are we thinking and feeling regarding our congregation in this Covid-19 time?
2. What gives us hope? What worries us? How are we listening realistically for signs for future direction? What do we envision?
3. What does our thinking and feeling imply for our spiritual lives and those we serve?
4. Given the seasons necessitated to re-open under COVID-19, what will our congregation look like during the coming year? In 18-24 months? What will change? What might stay the same? What will be sustainable for the next 18 months (staff and programs)?
5. What does the future imply for our budget? This year? Next year? Two years from now?
6. In reflecting on our congregation's mission and vision: What are the essential and non-essential elements of our ministry now in this COVID-19 time? What talents/skills do we need/do we not need? What do we keep/not keep in order to be responsive and agile, yet realistic about what these next 18-24 months will be like?
7. Create a new image of our congregation for this COVID-19 time (which could take us to January 2022). What does this image look like? How does it feel to us? Recognize the creativity. Recognize the loss/grieving.
8. What revenues might remain the same? What revenue is lost or anticipated to be lost? What expenses will change (lower or higher)? What is the net difference in revenues and expenses?

9. In what creative ways can we address revenues? How can we raise money for the work that needs to be done, rather than move directly to cut aspects of ministry that are vital?

Your words, your images, and your hopes in the midst of reality will inform your budget and your staffing. These are difficult decisions and they can be life-giving decisions. We are living the reality of a volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous world. But we can, if we chose, live it with vision (and mission), understanding, clarity, and agility. Listen for the future – grieve what has been lost; and imagine what new life can be found. The past is never going to become the present again.

If you would like assistance facilitating this conversation in your Vestry, please contact the Bishop's Office. We are here to assist in any way possible.

### **On-line Survey**

And finally, we have created a brief on-line survey to help us assess the financial condition of our congregations and diocese. Your immediate response to this survey is vital for timely decision-making. A link to the on-line survey will be sent to you directly from the Office for Congregational Development and Vitality, and we ask that you complete it no later than next Tuesday, 12<sup>th</sup> May.

## **In Conclusion**

In the midst of this pandemic, we must acknowledge our gratitude for all that our congregations, schools, and special ministries are doing to engage with the challenges of these new times as priests and pastors, and as leaders in your communities. As we face each day and every new circumstance, we must never doubt that God is with us. If the resurrection of Jesus means that we can never go back to how things were, as his disciples quickly discovered despite their best efforts, the resurrection is God's assurance that there lies before us a future of unimaginable promise. As God is, so God calls us to act with courage and faith even with our doubts and in our worst moments. If nothing else, living through this pandemic invites us to explore and affirm our collective vulnerability: we can be our worst selves when we are afraid, or we can be our best and bravest selves. There is often very little distance between the two when we are fearful and vulnerable because when we are afraid our default position is self-protection. "We do not have to be scary when we are scared. Let's choose awkward, brave, and kind." xxii

Let us choose solidarity, the strength that comes with it, and claim the hope of the resurrection and a future of unimaginable promise.

*Parts of this document have been adapted from material from the Dioceses of Texas and Colorado and the Centers for Disease Control.*

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## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> Reviewing the best practice scenarios proposed by health officials globally and within the U.S. allows leadership to get an understanding about what is expected in the weeks to come. This document is presented in order to prepare our institutions and churches of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas to return to worship and our activities of evangelism, and service.

<sup>ii</sup> Yong, Ed. “Our Pandemic Summer.” *The Atlantic*, Atlantic Media Company, 15 Apr. 2020, [https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2020/04/pandemic-summer-coronavirus-reopening-back-normal/609940/?campaign\\_id=39&emc=edit\\_tv\\_20200416&instance\\_id=17687&nl=david-leonhardt&reqi\\_id=61990126&segment\\_id=25301&te=1&user\\_id=bbec27cd379794ee03d08f7d8b8ffd99](https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2020/04/pandemic-summer-coronavirus-reopening-back-normal/609940/?campaign_id=39&emc=edit_tv_20200416&instance_id=17687&nl=david-leonhardt&reqi_id=61990126&segment_id=25301&te=1&user_id=bbec27cd379794ee03d08f7d8b8ffd99)

<sup>iii</sup> Preparedness is normally a part of every phase for those who work in disaster planning. I left it separate here because we are focused specifically on this virus and not overall disaster planning.

<sup>iv</sup> This paper, study, and proposals are an attempt to apply the “Roadmap to Reopening” health protocols to the church. It is adapted primarily from the following report. Gottlieb, Scott, Caitlin Rivers, Mark McClellan, Lauren Silvis, and Crystal Watson. “National Coronavirus Response: A Roadmap to Reopening.” *Real Clear Science*. American Enterprise Institute, 29 Mar. 2020. Web. 10 Apr. 2020. (<https://www.aei.org/research-products/report/national-coronavirus-response-a-road-map-to-reopening/>)

<sup>v</sup> Institute of Medicine, *Crisis Standards of Care: Summary of a Workshop Series* (Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2010), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK32749/>.

<sup>vi</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Interim US Guidance for Risk Assessment and Public Health Management of Persons with Potential Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Exposures: Geographic Risk and Contacts of Laboratory-Confirmed Cases,” March 22, 2020, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/risk-assessment.html>.

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- vii Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Interim US Guidance for Risk Assessment and Public Health Management of Persons with Potential Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Exposures.”
- viii Institute of Medicine, *Crisis Standards of Care*.
- ix As soon as a vaccine or therapeutic looks promising in pivotal clinical trials (i.e., it has been shown to be safe and looks like it will also be effective), the US government should work with industry to begin planning for mass manufacturing, distribution, and administration. New provisions enacted under the recently passed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act allow for large-scale manufacturing of promising therapies, in advance of approval, to help make sure there will be adequate supply available for mass distribution, should a product demonstrate that it is safe and effective and win regulatory approval. US Food and Drug Administration, “Step 3: Clinical Research,” [https://www.fda.gov/patients/drug-development-process/step-3-clinical-research#Clinical\\_Research\\_Phase\\_Studies](https://www.fda.gov/patients/drug-development-process/step-3-clinical-research#Clinical_Research_Phase_Studies).
- x Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Coronavirus (COVID-19),” <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>; US Department of Health and Human Services, “BARDA’s Novel Coronavirus Medical Countermeasure Portfolio,” <https://www.phe.gov/emergency/events/COVID19/Pages/BARDA.aspx>; National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, <https://www.niaid.nih.gov/>; US Department of Defense, “Coronavirus: DOD Response,” <https://www.defense.gov/Explore/Spotlight/Coronavirus/>; and US Food and Drug Administration, “Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19),” <https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/counterterrorism-and-emerging-threats/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>.
- xi Gottlieb, Roadmap.
- xii Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Schools, Workplaces & Community Locations,” March 21, 2020, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/index.html>.
- xiii Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “People Who Are at Higher Risk for Severe Illness,” March 26, 2020, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-higher-risk.html>.
- xiv Gottlieb, Roadmap.
- xv Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Schools, Workplaces & Community Locations,” March 21, 2020, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/index.html>.
- xvi Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “People Who Are at Higher Risk for Severe Illness,” March 26, 2020, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-higher-risk.html>.
- xvii Gottlieb, Roadmap.
- xviii Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Schools, Workplaces & Community Locations,” March 21, 2020, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/index.html>.
- xix Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “People Who Are at Higher Risk for Severe Illness,” March 26, 2020, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-higher-risk.html>.
- xx Gottlieb, Roadmap.
- xxii Author Brene Brown