**DIRECTIVES FOR PHASED RE-OPENING OF CHURCHES**

***DIOCESE OF NEW ENGLAND / ORHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA***

**AS APPLIED TO HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH**

Authorization to Re-Open Holy Trinity Approved by His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon

May 00, 2020

Primate

Orthodox Church in America

Locum Tenens of the Diocese of New England

**Liturgical Services**

Divine Liturgy on Sunday at 9:30am

**Preparation**

1. All Federal & Civil Guidelines have been adhered to; as well as Synodal & Diocesan directives.
2. The narthex, nave, altar, sacristies, and downstairs bathrooms were sanitized on (date). Until gathering of more than five are approved for social gatherings, there will be no Cofree Hour. Executive Order No. 7N, issued on March 26, 2020, by the State of Connecticut Governor, New Lamont, states: “***Religious, spiritual, and worship gatherings of more than 50 are prohibited***.”
3. Willimantic has been in a downward trajectory since its peak of coronavirus cases on April 15. We are well beyond the 14-day mandated period.
4. Windham County (referred to as simply ‘Windham’ on all models) includes Willimantic, along with 32 smaller adjacent towns, has the fewest number of confirmed Covid-19 patients in the entire state of Connecticut.
5. According to the Connecticut Department of Public Health as of May 11, 2020, per Windham:

Confirmed Cases: 106, Case Rate Per 10,000: 429; Number of Deaths: 7 (second fewest in state).

**Attendance**

1. Using state of Connecticut Executive Order No. 7N as a guide, we are limited to 18 people in the church per Divine Liturgy The breakdown is 12 parishioners sitting at each end of the pew; 6/12 pews will be utilized. The church will be filled from the front back. Please sit in one of the 12 designated spots which have been marked with a colored dot. Please fill the church from the front to the back. Additionally, there were be two singers, stationed in the front of the nave near the iconostasis, two altar servers, and one Swiss army knife person who will be responsible for ‘d’ (see below **\***).
2. **The Valley Street door will be locked at 9:30.** No one will be permitted to enter after that time, per Synodal directives. A sign will be placed on the front door, and will include “***Enter at Your Own Risk***”.
3. Those coming to church on a designated Sunday should enter through the front door on Valley Street. The door to the downstairs hall (Mansfield Avenue side of church) will remain closed. We will remain sensitive to Diana’s needs and act out of safety. Out of courtesy and safety to others, please be in church no later than 9:20, to avoid having as many as 17 people gathering in the narthex at the same time.
4. **\*** There will a designated usher/door keeper who will remain in the back of the church in order to a) open doors, b) light all the candles that parishioners purchase, c) ring the bell.
5. Those coming to church should take their temperature at home. Those with a temperature of 100.4 or above should not enter. A thermal thermometer will be purchased if Diocesan directives require that we do so.
6. Those coming to church on designated days for Liturgy should enter through the front door on Valley Street.

**Attending Services**

1. Due to restricted number of people, all attendees must register to attend in the event someone eventually tests positive for Covid-19, and it is important to know the names of those who were in attendance on that Sunday. There is a name for this: “Contact Tracing”.
2. You must let Father Marc know via mail that you would like to attend Liturgy, no later than 5:00pm on the Friday (but not before 10:00a on Wednesday) prior to the upcoming Sunday. Those who reply after the 17 slots have been filled, we be asked if they would like to attend the following Sunday.
3. **Hurt feelings are a concern, so please plan on attending every other Sunday, although it may happen that there are some who might be at Liturgy on consecutive Sundays depending on how many reply.**
4. We are using a “*Family Under One Roof*” model where families will be counted as one unit and not individually. Parents must keep their children close to them when in church. Those with very young children who would more likely to wander and be unable to keep safe social distancing requirements, would be encouraged to stay at home, according to His Beatitude All children over the age of two will be required to wear a mask.
5. As we always have, we will continue to treat our non-Orthodox spouses, and (catechumen) Bruce, with the same respect extended to our members. They, too, have a seat at the table.
6. With the exception of the priest and chanter/choir all attendees must wear a face covering at all times.
7. Every person must sanitize their hands immediately upon entering the church.
8. Disposable gloves will be available if the person in attendance prefers that extra layer of protection.
9. Liturgy books which are normally in the pews, have been put away. Bring your own from home.
10. The collection basket will not be passed; instead a single basket will be placed in rear of the nave for offerings.
11. There should be no veneration of icons, the Chalice after Communion, or cross at the end of Liturgy. The person attending is encouraged to approach the venerating icons, cross yourself, and bow slightly.

**The Choir**

1. Should you have more than person singing the responses, those singing must maintain social distancing and stand where possible towards the front of the temple, closest to the iconostasis. We are limited to two singers/chanters at this time in order to social distance. Singers/chanters are not required to wear a face covering, but they may if they wish to. The two chanters may sing antiphonally and stand opposite each other if they would like to.

**Receiving Holy Communion (*There are two options outlined by His Beatitude and have been combined*)**

1. Communicants need to maintain a safe distance of 6’when in Communion Line. Priest must wear mask when distributing communion, according to Diocesan directives.
2. Prior to arriving at the chalice, please take a paper napkin that will be made available to each person and place it under your chin; use it to wipe your mouth after receiving the Holy Eucharist. Until further notice, the use of the communion cloth, and serves to hold it, will be discontinued.
3. Option #1&2: Tip your head back and the priest will place the Eucharist in your mouth. Do not close your mouth on the spoon. Two communion spoons will be used/rotated and will be sanitized after each person receives.

**The Process** (originally option #2**)**: After receiving Communion, the spoon will be placed into a glass of Everclear or grain alcohol, then into a glass of hot water, then wiped with a towel. The same procedure will follow with the second spoon, and then the process will then be repeated.

1. Dispose of your napkin in the brown paper bag. The napkins will be burned after Divine Liturgy.
2. Antidiron (blessed, not consecrated, bread) will be offered post Communion by an altar server who will have cut the bread while wearing rubber gloves, and will hand out to the communicant while wearing a clean rubber glove.
3. **NOTE**: I understand that the reception of the Eucharist from a common spoon, even a sterilized one, will continue to be a hot topic. Although this is a personal decision, the choice each person makes will be respected and not judged. In a conversation with Diocesan clergy on May 7, His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon, said: “The Body and Blood of Christ cannot spread disease; the risk (of Covid-19) is in the proximity to another person.” In Synodal directives to DNE clergy, dated April 7, 2020, His Beatitude wrote, “The holy body and precious blood of our Lord can never be a source of disease, it is after all for the healing of soul and body …” Then, in a statement released by the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America on March 13, 2020, and a second time on March 30, 2020, the two documents contained the following statement: “We seek in these measures to follow the principles enumerated by His Eminence, Metropolitan Nicholas of Mesogeia (b. 4/13/1954) of the Church of Greece, who said, ‘All measures that undermine faith and hope in God, anything that doubts the efficacy of Holy Communion and the mysteries is to be rejected. Anything that honors the community of the faithful and our fellow man is an expression of love for them and for God’.”

**After Liturgy Opportunity**

If you have not emailed in order to sign up to attend Liturgy, or were not one of the initial 17 to do so, Father Marc will remain in the church from 11:00a-1:00p every Sunday. Every 15 minutes, someone or a family is allowed to enter the church. A person may sit silently, light a candle, have their Confession heard, or receive Communion from the reserve sacrament, or simply enjoy conversation. You must let Father Marc know what time slot you are claiming. Confessions will not be heard in order to maintain 6’ of social distancing. Hand sanitizer must be applied upon entering the church, and a mask must be worn at all times.

With Love & Blessings,

*Father Marc*