

## **St. Michael's Orthodox Church, Mt. Carmel, PA**

### **COVID-19 Re-opening Process**

Now that His Eminence has approved the below parish re-opening plan, the parish would like to start Saturday Reader Vespers on May 23<sup>rd</sup> with just council members who choose to attend. If this first service goes well, then the following Saturday the service would be opened to the parish. The typical attendance for Saturday Vespers is about eight. If the Saturday Reader Vespers services work out, the parish would then like to proceed to having a Sunday Readers Obednitza which is anticipated to draw a larger attendance, possibly up to 20. At the point where it is deemed safe to provide Divine Liturgy, it is anticipated an attendance of about 25 to 30. This would conform with the current state guideline for limiting attendance to 25.

The council believes a phased approach in starting services would provide the opportunity to test and prepare for the safety protocols from the CDC, Diocese, and parish. The council also believes that the safety precautions detailed in this planning document are a must and no one should have a false sense of security because they are in a church.

There is significant work to be done. Fortunately, the parish has individuals willing to clean and help with the process. Currently, the parish has a sufficient supply of disinfectants, masks, disinfectant wipes, and hand sanitizer on-hand.

### **Re-opening Plan Details**

1. Communication of Safety Requirements
  - a. Post in bulletin at least two weeks before the first service
  - b. Post at the entrance door to the church
  - c. Post on the Parish web page
  - d. Post on the Parish Facebook page
  - e. Verbal instructions will be provided by the greeter(s) on the safety requirements
2. Attendance - Capacity
  - a. During this phase-in period, church schedules will only be posted in the bulletin, not on the parish website.
  - b. There are 22 pews in the church. By blocking every other pew, there would still be 11 pews to use. With 6' spacing, 30 individuals could easily be fit in the Nave, using the 11 pews. CDC guidelines do not suggest that individuals who live in the same household need to social distance.
  - c. The Church choir loft is very large and can hold 24 members; however, there are only about 8 members at full choir. While it is noted in the Diocesan guidelines that the choir should be moved downstairs, it was discussed that by implementing safety precautions, the choir could safely stay in the loft. If the choir remained in the loft, all choir members would wear masks. In addition, members never have been placed near the railing; and, currently there is over an 8' setback from the edge.

3. Church Entrance
  - a. Only the front entrance to the church will be used. The hall entrance will be locked at all times.
  - b. The front entrance door will be left open, if possible.
  - c. If the entrance door cannot be left open, a greeter/screener (wearing a mask and gloves) is to open the door.
  - d. Anyone entering the church will be asked if they are experiencing any cold-related symptoms or have been around someone with the virus within the last 14 days. If so, they will not be able to enter the church.
  - e. The greeter/screener will have hand sanitizer and ask those entering to accept using it before entering.
  - f. Everyone who enters the church must be wearing a mask. If not, a mask will be provided from a sealed bag. (Children over 2 years old will be required to wear masks.)
  - g. No one is to assemble in the vestibule.
  - h. An individual will maintain a list of who attends services.
4. Choir
  - a. Members will all wear masks for the entire service
  - b. If the choir remains upstairs, stands will be spaced 6' apart with no more than 2 people per stand. There are 7 stands available.
  - c. There is hand sanitizer in the choir and members must use it before touching books.
  - d. If the choir moves downstairs, individual booklets will be made for each choir member to keep. Choir members must stand 6' apart.
  - e. The council and choir members believe that with the precautions, outlined in Items 2.c. (above), they could provide better safety and social distancing in the choir.
5. Candles
  - a. Cash/checks used to purchase candles will be placed in a specified container. No change will be provided.
  - b. Individuals must bring prepared candle intention lists to the service.
  - c. Only designated individuals will touch and light candles.
6. Pews
  - a. Every other pew will be blocked off and social distancing guidelines will be adhered to.
  - b. It will be encouraged that individuals sit in the same location each week. Labels could be made to assist with this.
  - c. Family members can sit next to each other.
  - d. Pews will be cleaned weekly
7. Paper items
  - a. Prayer books will be purchased and provided for individuals to keep and bring each week.
  - b. All existing prayer books have been removed from the pews and stored.
  - c. Choir books will be provided to individual choir members, if the choir is moved downstairs.
  - d. A basket will be placed on the center table in the church for the collection. The collection will be counted by an individual using disposable gloves and wiped with disinfectant.

8. Church
  - a. Windows and doors will remain open during services when the weather is favorable.
  - b. Tissues will be provided throughout the church
  - c. Hand Sanitizer will be provided at various locations.
9. Altar Area/Communion
  - a. Priests and altar servers must wash hands following CDC Guidelines before touching anything.
  - b. All precautions should be taken for preparing Proskomedia
  - c. Altar servers, who cut the prosphora, must wear food service gloves.
  - d. The prosphora, provided following Communion, will be placed in small individual paper cups.
  - e. The wine provided after Communion will be placed in small plastic cups and poured by an individual wearing gloves.
  - f. Markers indicating proper distancing for Holy Communion will be placed upon the floor.
  - g. A paper towel, with a paper plate underneath to provide better stability, will be used in lieu of the Communion cloth and will be held by the individual receiving Communion. The paper items will be disposed of properly in a separate basket placed aside the table containing the prosphora and wine.
10. Icons
  - a. No kissing of icons or the cross
11. Personal Contact
  - a. No hugging
  - b. No hand shakes
  - c. Bow, smile, nod, say hello
  - d. No anointing of oil on forehead unless a new Q-tip is used for each individual and then properly disposed of.
12. Weekly cleaning and disinfecting.
  - a. Windows should be opened while cleaning
  - b. All touch points (doors, switches, pews) will be wiped down
  - c. Anyone entering church mid-week must wipe down anything touched with disinfectant wipes
13. If there is notification that someone in the church had tested positive, notification to the Dean will take place and services will cease for at least 14 days. Individuals that were in attendance will need to be notified as per CDC guidelines, which does not allow to disclose the individual(s) name.