



EPISCOPAL CHURCH
IN CONNECTICUT
PARTICIPATING IN GOD'S MISSION

LIVING WITH COVID-19

Protocols and Directions for Clergy and Vestries in the
Episcopal Church in Connecticut

Contents:

- 2 | Letter from our Bishops
- 4 | General Protocols in Phase 3 of
Reopening Connecticut
- 6 | Directions for Those Considering Holy
Eucharist with the Distribution of Communion
- 9 | A Draft Covenant for In-Person Worship

PHASE 3
REVISED OCTOBER 2020

Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.
Acts 4:32-33

Dear Companions in Christ:

Grace to you and peace in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The State of Connecticut anticipates a Phase 3 reopening in early July as we continue to live in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are aware that parishes are beginning to experiment with some form of in-person worship as we move through the phases of the reopening of our state. And so, we write with an update to our May 20, 2020, communication “Living with COVID-19: Protocols and Direction for Clergy and Vestries in the Episcopal Church in Connecticut.”

Since mid-February, parishes in the Episcopal Church in Connecticut have been diligent in mitigating the spread of COVID-19 by suspending in-person worship and the distribution of Communion. This suspension was necessary in order to “love our neighbors as ourselves” by not physically gathering together in churches or receiving the bread and wine from the common cup. During this time, we have come to a deeper understanding of what it means to be the worshipping body of Christ by tapping into our theological imagination and embracing many different forms of online worship. Even as we adapted to the realities of living with COVID-19, our church and nation have been called to wrestle deeply with the sins of racism, white supremacy, and anti-Black bias in new and profound ways. And yet, in the midst of these twin pandemics of COVID-19 and racism, we have longed to receive the gift of the Holy Eucharist with reception of Communion in our church buildings.

As we move into Phase 3 of the reopening of Connecticut, we continue to support parishes that choose not to offer in-person worship during Phase 3. This conservative and careful approach that prioritizes the most vulnerable among us is the most compassionate and caring response we can make to COVID-19.

If, in Phase 3, you begin to have in-person worship, we encourage you to refer to the protocols and guidelines that we promulgated in our May “Living with COVID-19” communication with this exception: the number of people worshipping indoors may be increased to ¼ of your church’s occupancy with a limit of 100, whichever is smaller; and 150 people for outside worship. Here we want to underscore that epidemiologists conclude that indoor gatherings are much riskier with respect to spreading COVID-19 than outdoor gatherings.

We thus stress that if you are going to offer in-person worship in Phase 3, we highly recommend outdoor worship as preferable to indoor worship. Further, in Phase 3 we urge you to offer the liturgies of Spiritual Communion, Morning Prayer, Ante Communion, and other services that do not distribute Communion, waiting on the distribution of Communion until Connecticut is in Phase 4 of reopening.

We write now to provide you with protocols and directions with respect to the Eucharist, including the receiving of Communion. We offer these protocols and directions at this time to help you begin to prepare for Phase 4, and also so that we have a set of common expectations and guidelines for parishes that are considering the receiving of Communion in Phase 3.

We understand that the decision regarding the timing of the return to in-person worship and the nature of offering the Eucharist is that of the parish Rector or Priest-in-Charge, (or Wardens when the parish does not have a priest) in consultation with lay leadership and under the direction of the Bishops. We give thanks for the collegial and relational manner in which you are approaching decisions regarding in-person worship and we thank God for your incredible and faithful leadership in these difficult times.

You might find it useful as you begin in-person worship again to offer a "covenant" for members of your parish seeking to come back to the church building for worship. Following the protocols and directions for Phase 3 below, is a draft covenant based upon the Baptismal Covenant. We offer this as an example of something you might pursue in your own parish to assist with a smooth and safe transition to in-person worship. The draft covenant is not a finished or static product but rather is intended to foster your own theological imagination and faithful leadership. If you wish, feel free to use it and/or adapt it, depending on your parish context.

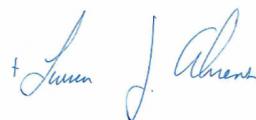
We thank you for your faithful participation in God's mission in the world. These are challenging times and our embrace of God's love and sharing that love in word and action continues to be an important part of our calling. Please know of our prayers and support for all of you as we step into Phase 3. Reach out to us if you have any questions, or ask your clergy or wardens to bring their questions to the Wednesday morning call with the bishops.

As we pursue our life together as ECCT in this time of COVID-19, let us be of one heart and soul, offering both our online and in-person worship in common, so that we can give our testimony to the resurrection of our Lord Jesus and be filled with God's grace.

Faithfully,



The Rt. Rev. Ian T. Douglas
Bishop Diocesan



The Rt. Rev. Laura J. Ahrens
Bishop Suffragan

General Protocols in Phase 3 of Reopening Connecticut

- There is no compulsion to return to in-person worship in Phase 3. A conservative and careful approach that prioritizes the most vulnerable among us is the most compassionate and caring response we can make to COVID-19.
- Parish clergy should feel free not to resume leadership of in-person worship based upon their own risk factors.
- The protocols and directions offered in the May 20, 2020 "Living with COVID-19" remain the safe practice standard in order to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, with the exception that the number of people for indoor in-person worship be expanded to ½ of your church's occupancy with a cap of 200, and no maximum for outside worship with masks and six foot distancing.
- Outdoor worship is much more preferable to indoor worship as indoor gatherings have a much higher risk of spreading COVID-19.
- When a parish begins to offer in-person worship, online worship should continue for those who are at higher-risk and cannot attend in-person worship and for those who choose not to attend in-person worship.
- During Phase 3, in-person worship should focus on liturgies of Spiritual Communion, Morning Prayer, Ante Communion, and other services that do not distribute Holy Communion.
- During Phase 3, planning for reception of Communion is vital as we look to the possibilities of receiving the sacrament in Phase 4.

- The directions for Holy Eucharist with the reception of Communion are intended for services held inside a building. The general trajectory of these guidelines is recommended to be followed for outside worship as well.
- When preparing for reception of Communion, only bread should be received.
- When offering Communion to communicants, care should be taken so that those who choose not to receive the bread do not feel excluded or uncomfortable.
- For additional information see: "[Resuming Care-Filled Worship and Sacramental Life During a Pandemic](#)" produced by The Ecumenical Consultation on Protocols for Worship, Fellowship, and Sacraments — an interdisciplinary group of theologians, scientists, physicians, pastors, bishops, and practitioners from United Methodist, Evangelical Lutheran, Episcopal, Pan-Methodist, and Roman Catholic traditions.

Directions for Those Considering Holy Eucharist with the Distribution of Communion

- Setting up for the Service
 - There should only be one identified Altar Guild person who should use gloves when setting for the Holy Eucharist.
 - If Eucharistic vestments are worn, only the priest touches the vestments from sacristy closet to their return.
 - The distribution of Communion should be limited to bread, noting that reception of one kind is full participation in the Holy Eucharist.
 - Wafers, in original sealed packages, are to be used and not whole bread or communion wafers from open packages.
- The Offertory
 - Offerings are not processed forward, neither bread or money.
 - On-line giving is encouraged. Locations to receive offerings should be located near the doors. (See May, 2020 "Living with COVID-19)
 - The Celebrant is the only person in the sanctuary space, and will set the altar and turn the pages of the Altar Book.
 - Only the Celebrant may touch the vessels/altar furnishings.
 - All Communion vessels/altar furnishings need to be sanitized after the service.
 - Communion wafers remain sealed in original packaging through the Eucharistic Prayer. The package is opened only after the fraction anthem, in preparation for distribution.
- The Great Thanksgiving and Breaking of the Bread
 - The Celebrant uses a mask throughout the service of The Holy Communion, from entering the sanctuary, throughout distribution, and through the Postcommunion Prayer.
 - The Celebrant should use gloves and/or sanitize hands for the Eucharistic Prayer and laying on of hands.

- The wafers, paten, and cup should be covered by a fair linen or corporal throughout the Eucharistic Prayer. The paten and cup are only to be uncovered for the elevation.
- A priest's host placed on the outside of the sealed or covered hosts can be used for the fraction. The Celebrant should lay aside the priest's host for consumption after the distribution of Communion and prior to the Postcommunion Prayer.
- For pastoral sensitivity and for solidarity with the congregation, the Celebrant should not consume the wine. There should only be one identified Altar Guild person who should use gloves when setting for the Holy Eucharist.
- The Distribution
 - The Celebrant will sanitize their hands and/or wear new gloves prior to the distribution, only then should the priest open the packaged wafers and prepare for distribution.
 - The church will be clearly marked to show the direction of flow for approaching and leaving the altar to maintain six-foot physical distancing.
 - The Communion line should clearly delineate six-foot markers for physical distancing.
 - Ushers help instruct the flow of communicants and also assist in maintaining six-foot physical distancing.
 - Communicants are asked to receive the wafer standing in front of the priest. No kneeling or touching the altar rail.
 - The Celebrant will drop the wafer into open hands of the communicant, being careful not to touch those receiving Communion. If the priest touches the communicant by accident, the priest changes gloves or sanitizes hands.
 - The communicant receives the wafer in open hands and moves away to a separate identified space, six or more feet away, to consume the wafer. The communicant will then return to their pew by a different path than that used to approach the altar, maintaining six-foot distancing at all times.
 - Communicants coming forward for a blessing should not receive the laying on of hands by the Celebrant, but rather should be blessed with a sign of the cross said over them.

- After the Service

- Vigilance should be kept to maintain all safety precautions to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, especially the wearing of masks, no touching, and six-foot distancing, as the service ends and worshippers depart the building or property.
- Worshippers should depart the church building as soon as possible.
- No sacrament is to be reserved following the service.
- No home Communion or Communion outside of the worship space.
- One identified gloved Altar Guild member to clear the communion vessels after the service.

A Draft Covenant for In-Person Worship

Celebrant Do you believe in God the Father?
People I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

Celebrant Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?
People I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

Celebrant Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?
People I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

Celebrant Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers by:

- faithfully attending worship either in person or through virtual online offerings of my church
- reading spiritual devotionals, particularly exploring the apostolic teachings of persons from different races and backgrounds from myself
- engaging in conversation, study, and action regarding racial healing, justice, reconciliation, and the sin of racism, white supremacy and anti-Black bias.

People I will, with God's help.

- Celebrant Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord by:
- repenting of the sin of racism, white supremacy and anti-Black bias
 - learning about the dynamics of distorted power imbalances and the impact those disparities have on relationships and opportunities
 - repenting when I use my power for my own benefit rather than for the benefit of all of God's people
 - seeking to return to the Lord through adopting healthy life skills and reestablishing healthy boundaries with others.

People I will, with God's help.

- Celebrant Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ by:
- revealing in my actions how God's love is to be shared and nurtured
 - seeking to be a healer, reconciler, and peacebuilder in my community.

People I will, with God's help.

- Celebrant Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself by:
- wearing a mask over my nose and mouth at all times in church buildings, except momentarily to receive the sacrament or lead worship through an assigned speaking part, and follow public health guidelines for hand sanitizing and disinfecting
 - only attending worship and receiving Communion if I am non-symptomatic for the COVID-19 virus or any other transmittable disease that could compromise the health of anyone present
 - abstaining from attending in person-worship if doing so would put me at greater risk due to my own health status

- trusting and supporting the decisions of both my diocesan and congregational leaders
- staying connected with others in my community by telephone, video chat, or mail
- expanding my definition of “neighbor” by getting to know and be in relationship with persons different from myself in terms of race, nationality, first language, socio economic status and political party
- seeking to serve Christ by being a better listener to the stories of others.

People I will, with God's help.

Celebrant Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being by:

- having no physical contact with people beyond the members of my own household while in church
- maintaining a six foot or more distance from other members of the congregation
- respecting any requests for distance, masking, and cleaning, to ensure the safety and comfort level of others
- seeking to commit to addressing racial inequality and white supremacy by learning about the historical impact of racism and colonialism in my own life and in the life of the Church, and in the United States
- incorporating new antiracism skills into my own life
- speaking out when I see racism, white supremacy and anti-Black bias
- supporting my church in its commitment to being an inclusive community for all
- working for equal treatment of all persons in the church, in my community, in our governmental programs, and throughout the United States.

People I will, with God's help.