

St. Michael's Orthodox Church - Greensburg, PA
Re-Opening Procedures / Guidelines for Church Attendance related to Covid-19
May 2020

These guidelines for re-opening our parish apply to the month of May and are based on the most recent directions from His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH, as well as specific instructions from His Grace Bishop THOMAS. These guidelines adhere to local and regional rules and recommendations and are subject to change as the situation evolves.

ELDERLY AND AT-RISK PEOPLE

Per the Metropolitan's letter, in the first two phases of the CDC reopening strategies those who are elderly and at-risk are encouraged to remain home for services. To receive Communion and Confession, they may come to the church by appointment. Also, services will continue to be livestreamed during this re-opening phase. NOTE: Individuals should consult their healthcare provider and CDC guidelines in order to understand risk factors for the virus.

LIVESTREAMING

Livestreamed services will continue on the St. Michael's website home page and Facebook page through this re-opening phase. To respect the privacy of in-person attendees, the camera will be positioned so that pews are not visible, and the live-stream will be paused during Communion.

SOCIAL DISTANCING

Social distancing (a minimum of 6 feet between people) will be maintained at all times inside and outside of church, including parking lot. Family members who live in the same household are exempt from this.

FACE COVERING

Parishioners over the age of 2 years will wear a face covering / mask (covering mouth and nose) upon entering the building and will wear it throughout the service. Those who are unable to do so are asked to follow the services via livestream.

ENTRY/EXIT FROM CHURCH

Only one door will be used to enter and exit the church. This will be the double glass door at the rear (where memorial wheat is distributed). Please note that in an emergency all doors are available for exiting the building, but we are requesting the use of the designated entry/exit door in order to limit movement and exposure within the building.

ENTRY SCREENING

Parishioners' temperatures will be taken with a scan thermometer upon entrance to the church building. A temperature reading of 100 degrees F. or greater will exclude parishioners from entering.

Doors will be open for entry screening between 9:45 a.m. and 10:15 a.m. and will be locked at 10:15 a.m. Parishioners are asked to wait outside and maintain the 6-foot distance from each other until it is their turn to enter. Depending on numbers of people, we may assign staggered arrival times to avoid a bottleneck at the entrance.

SEATING

Parishioners are asked to sit only where they see a blue marking on the pew, to ensure social distancing. Please do not sit closer to the aisle than the blue mark. A map / seating guide will be distributed at the church.

When you consider where to sit, just think **"Two in a pew!"** and follow these directions for individuals and families:

Individuals may choose any blue-marked space EXCEPT REMEMBER **"TWO IN A PEW"** so if two people (or a family) are already in that pew, please sit elsewhere. For example, if a couple is sitting together at one end, no one else sits in that pew.

Family members living in the same household may sit close together at or between any blue-marked spaces, as long as no one else is already in that pew when they sit down. Families who sit together need to remain together, with children staying close to parents; young ones are not to be permitted to wander about in the open spaces. While this is always a healthy practice, it is mandatory now.

Note: To maintain social distancing, every other pew must remain vacant. For us, this means the very front-row and two back pews of center section are not in use at this time.

NUMBER OF ATTENDEES

We have decided to wait until **Sunday, May 24, 2020** to begin re-opening services. For now, attendance is for Divine Liturgy services only (not Orthros or Vespers) and our numbers are limited to 20 parishioners:

May 24, 2020: Maximum **20 parishioners**

May 31, 2020: Maximum **20 parishioners**

June 7 and beyond: to be determined

Parishioners may attend on a first-come basis, and will be asked to call ahead and "make a reservation" as described in the next section:

MAKE A RESERVATION

Parishioners are asked to call the Church Office (724) 834-1311 on Thursday or Friday prior to the Sunday they are planning to attend; they should leave a message stating their name, phone number and number of people, and then wait for a follow-up call from the Church to confirm. Staggered arrival times may be assigned to avoid a bottleneck at the entrance, and several

questions will be asked over the telephone, such as:

1. Have you or someone you live with traveled outside of Westmoreland County in the past two weeks?
2. Have you had any symptoms such as fever, cough, shortness of breath, or been in contact with someone who has had these symptoms over the past month?

Note: The names of those in attendance at each service will be kept on file for contact tracing, in case someone becomes positive for Covid-19, so people can be advised to self-quarantine and so that we are able to assist the public health department with contact information.

COMMUNION

The Holy Eucharist (Communion) will continue from a common cup, with details provided below. Fr. John will wear a facemask during this portion of the service. Prosphora (Holy Bread) will be handed out by an altar server wearing a mask and gloves.

Fr. John would like parishioners to feel welcome at church even if they are uncomfortable approaching the chalice due to fears or concerns about catching the virus; each person may choose his or her own comfort level and act accordingly.

When approaching the chalice for Communion:

The center aisle will have markings on the floor to ensure social distancing is maintained throughout the Communion line. When you reach the front of the line, please wait at the last mark on the floor, 6 feet away from Fr. John, and listen as he completes his prayer for you (“...for the forgiveness of sins and for the healing of soul and body...”). Then approach the chalice as usual, pull aside your mask, tilt your head back and open your mouth wide so that there is no contact with the spoon - do not close lips on spoon. Replace mask and return to your seat. Fr. John will be wearing a facemask during communion.

COLLECTION

A stationary collection basket will be located at the rear of the church for envelope drop-offs, to avoid the passing of the collection basket. Online donations are also welcome via website.

DISMISSAL

As with Communion, parishioners are asked to pay attention to markings on center aisle floor and maintain social distancing as they approach Fr. John for his blessing. He will bless parishioners from 6 feet away.

CHURCH HOURS

As directed by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, in taking precautions necessary to protect our community as a whole, open access to the church building will be prohibited during this re-opening phase. Visits to the church will be by appointment. Please contact Fr. John for an appointment.

GENERAL HYGIENE

- Parishioners are asked to bring their own hand sanitizer at this time.
- Parishioners are asked to wear their own face coverings/masks – none will be provided.
- No kissing of icons or lighting of candles will be done at this time to help maintain sanitation practices.
- Restrooms will be open during the service; handwashing is encouraged.
- Church social hall, kitchen areas, classrooms, multi-purpose room will not be used at this time. The only areas open will be the church sanctuary itself, and the restrooms.
- Food or drinks will not be served.
- Avoid talking face to face and close personal contact such as touching, hugging, handshaking.
- Parishioners are asked to bring their own service / prayer books as these will be temporarily removed from the pews.
- The basic rule is “don’t touch anything” -- including your face, other people, icons, etc.

If you have any questions, please call the Church Office: 724-834-1311.

Thank you and God Bless.