



EPISCOPAL
DIOCESE *of*
INDIANAPOLIS

October 5, 2020

Dear Ones:

As we pass the six-month mark of the pandemic, I marvel at the myriad ways you have found to worship both online and in person, and to gather in responsible ways. As our understanding of COVID-19 grows, I continue in our commitment to evolve our guidelines for regathering. The following revision reflects this evolving understanding of the risks and has an eye on the coming flu season.

Highlights of changes in this draft include:

- Permission to use vocalists and wind instruments in outdoor settings in limited situations;
- A shift from a limit of 25 persons indoors to less than 30% of space capacity where and when permissible by law;
- Permission to use holy water stoops, baptismal fonts, hymnals and prayer books; and guidance on adult baptisms.

As before, we will, under no circumstances, convene in-person gatherings in communities where they are prohibited for public health reasons, but we can resume weeks or even months later than the state permits if that is what is necessary to keep our people safe.

These recommendations and standards are likely to be updated again as conditions and our understanding of the risks of COVID-19 evolve. My staff and I are here at every turn to support you as you assess the situation in your community and how your congregation is called to respond.

I continue to have deep appreciation for the faithfulness and care you have for one another and our communities. Our mission commitments to serve in Christ's name have never been more critical. May God continue to bless and keep you in these days.

Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jennifer Bookwala-Burrows".

Bishop Jennifer

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REOPENING GUIDELINES | VERSION 4, OCTOBER 5, 2020

This revision, made October 5, 2020, supersedes all previous versions of this document.

This document incorporates elements of discussions between Bishop Jennifer and lay and clergy leaders from across the diocese, diocesan staff meetings, conversations between the bishop and the Executive Council, the Standing Committee, and the Diocese of Northern Indiana. Additionally, it includes counsel from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Johns Hopkins University, the Church Insurance Company, the House of Bishops, and Episcopal Relief & Development. We are indebted to the dioceses of Maine, Georgia, Chicago and San Diego, and the Wisconsin Council of Churches for their generosity in helping us shape this document.

Live Streaming and Recording Worship from Church Buildings: Permissible as of May 24

A group of no more than 10 individuals may return to churches beginning on May 24 solely for the purpose of livestreaming or recording worship. We strongly recommend that clergy and lay people aged 65 and older or who have underlying medical conditions that put them at greater risk from the virus stay home, but the decision is left to the individual and the bishop's requirement that clergy age 65 and older stay home has been lifted. In addition, these live-streamed or recorded sessions must conform to the safety requirements outlined under "Building Use" on page 4 and "Worship and Fellowship" on page 6 of this document.

No congregation is required to return to its church building to livestream or record worship. You have the bishop's full support if you determine that continuing to stream or record from home is the best choice for your congregation.

Assembling for In-Person Public Worship: Permissible as of June 14

PUBLIC HEALTH STANDARDS

Your church may return to public in-person worship when COVID-19 infections in your county have been contained and are not increasing. Various data measures can be used to determine whether that is the case, including:

- The number of COVID-19 cases in your county has decreased for 14 days or has held steady with a mere handful of cases (five or fewer). Find this information on the [Indiana COVID-19 dashboard website](#).
- The infection rate is less than 1.0, which means that on average in the community, each infected person is infecting less than one other person and the total number of current cases is shrinking. The infection rate for many Indiana counties, but not all, may be found on the [Covid Act Now website](#). Click on the map of Indiana counties to find county-by-county data or use the search bar at the top of the page.

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- The positive test rate is less than 10%, preferably closer to 3% or less. The positive test rate measures how many people test positive compared to all who were tested in a given period of time and indicates whether testing is widespread enough to detect most new cases. The ability to identify and isolate cases is key to controlling the infection. This information may also be found on the Covid Act Now dashboard.
- The [Regenstrief Institute dashboard](#) tracks additional datapoints for each county in Indiana and includes other metrics such as hospitalization rates that can assist in assessing the risk of exposure in your county.

Verify the data you've collected by calling your county's health department and asking if COVID-19 has been contained. Ask also if the county retains the ability to test all Hoosiers who seek COVID-19 testing. Also confirm health officials in your county have systems in place to contact all individuals who test positive for COVID-19 and to complete contact tracing.

Each congregation's reopening team, described below, is responsible for assessing the available local data and determining the conditions in which the risk of infection is low enough that it is reasonable to offer in-person worship subject to the Regathering Plan that will be approved by Bishop Jennifer.

CONGREGATIONAL REGATHERING TEAMS

Before regathering in person, each congregation must establish a congregational regathering team composed of clergy and lay leaders whose tasks are the following:

- Develop a regathering plan for approval by Bishop Jennifer
- Monitor local public health conditions
- Remain in contact with bishop's staff as you monitor local outbreak conditions. Regathering teams need not inform the bishop's office of every decision they make as long as they are following their regathering plan. However, if the plan changes or if conditions necessitate returning to worship from home, please let the bishop's office know.

REGATHERING PLAN REQUIRED

If the risk of infection in your county has been significantly reduced in accordance with the public health standards above and your congregation's regathering plan has been approved by the bishop, you may be permitted to hold indoor gatherings in which the attendance does not exceed 30% of the seating capacity of the space. Such plans must conform to the standards outlined below.

No congregation is required to return to its church building or grounds for in-person public worship. You have the bishop's full support if you determine that continuing to stream or record from home or from your church building is the best choice for your congregation.

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HOW TO THINK ABOUT REOPENING YOUR CHURCH

In order to reopen for in-person worship, every congregation must create a Congregational Regathering Plan that incorporates provisions for good hygiene, cleaning and sanitizing procedures, physical distancing and other best practices. The complexity of the plan will depend on the size and configuration of your building. It need not be more elaborate than necessary. Before you begin your planning, however, we want you to consider one question: How confident are your clergy and lay leaders about returning to in-person worship? Please do not feel pressured to push ahead. Take the time necessary to feel comfortable with the process of reopening.

GUIDELINES FOR GATHERING

Resuming in-person worship during a pandemic raises a myriad of issues, some obvious and some not. Below you will find questions and recommendations to help guide your thinking, along with standards that must be met before the bishop will approve a reopening plan.

Canon Brendan O'Sullivan Hale (brendan@indydio.org), Canon Kristin White (white@indydio.org) and Transition Minister Jen Phelps (phelps@indydio.org) are prepared to support you through this challenging time. If you have questions or need clarification on any of the points found here, please contact them.

BUILDING USE

Before anyone can gather, your church must be ready to receive them. Building users besides the congregation, such as recovery groups, must be provided with a copy of this document and must come to an agreement on what standards are applicable to them. You may want to consider having outside groups sign liability agreements that clarify that the church is not legally responsible if any member of their group becomes ill with COVID-19. A model liability agreement is included in [Appendix 2](#). Each congregation will need to assess its ability to respond appropriately if an outbreak is associated with a building user.

Here are questions you will need to answer, provisions you will need to make, and recommendations that may be of help in preparing your building for worship and others uses.

Questions

How will you ensure safe airflow? Can your HVAC system be set to increase the rate of exchange with fresh air? Does the HVAC system have highly efficient particle filters in place?

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How will you ensure sanitation and disinfection of your physical plant including pews, doorknobs, light switches, restrooms, and other areas that people touch when they are in your building?

Do you need to make provisions for small group gathering spaces?

Do you need to make provisions to disinfect and/or restrict the use of nurseries or playgrounds?

If you hold multiple services, how will you ensure proper social distancing between those leaving the church and those arriving?

How will you communicate your safety standards and procedures to people both before they enter the building and while they are present at a service or meeting?

Recommendations

Post signs indicating symptoms and urging people to stay home and seek medical attention if they have symptoms.

Continue to allow staff members who use the church office to work from home as much as possible. Consider limiting the number of people who use the church office and discouraging visitors.

Require everyone present to wear a mask. Ensure that high-touch surfaces are regularly sanitized.

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Standards

You must maintain sufficient amounts of tissue, soap, hand sanitizer and disposable paper towels.

You must clean the building regularly, paying extra attention to high-touch surfaces like light switches, pews, doorknobs, restrooms, etc.

You must have a clearly articulated plan to communicate your safety standards and practices to the congregation.

WORSHIP AND FELLOWSHIP

We have been worshipping online for over six months. Some congregations have gathered in person while others have continued solely online. However we gather, the spiritual needs of the congregants who prefer to continue worshipping online must still be met. Additionally, due to restrictions on the size of public gatherings, many churches will need to manage attendance to remain within the law. This may require both registration and additional services.

Questions

If you choose to return to your buildings while those over 65 and those with underlying medical conditions are being advised to stay home, how will you provide for them and for others who do not feel safe attending church?

How will you respond to people in high risk categories who nonetheless want to return to in-person worship?

If you return to your church, will you continue to provide an online service? Online coffee hour?
Online small groups?

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How will you limit attendance at gatherings so there is room for visitors and newcomers to take part without exceeding the guideline maximum?

How will you coordinate logistics like reservations in order to make that happen?

Everyone present in church gatherings must wear masks. How will you provide masks for people who forget? How will you attend to someone who doesn't want to wear a mask?

Will you screen people who attend gatherings? How will you respond if someone appears ill?

What degree of exposure to someone with COVID-19 would preclude someone from gathering? (Someone in their household? In the workspace? A neighbor they pass on the street?)

How will you communicate seating arrangements that ensure social distancing?

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Recommendations

If you cannot continue to provide an online worship and fellowship opportunity for those who cannot yet attend church due to the pandemic, you should reconsider the decision to reenter your building.

We strongly recommend that clergy and lay people aged 65 and older or those who have underlying medical conditions that put them at greater risk from the virus stay home, but the decision is left to the individual. Clergy and staff members over age 65 who cannot work from home may return to work if the nature of their work and workspace allows them to practice proper social distancing.

Outdoor services are preferred over indoor services, assuming all necessary precautions are taken. Sunlight and increased air circulation have a protective effect. Gathering outdoors also allows for larger gatherings. The maximum size of an outdoor service will be determined by the size of the space and practical considerations such as sight lines and the ability to be heard.

Consider using an online church management system, such as Realm, or a free online event service such as Eventbrite, to take reservations for worship to ensure you do not exceed capacity.

Determine an alternative to passing the offertory plates. Provide a stationary and central offering basket. Encourage and make provisions for online giving (available through the diocese at no cost to congregations: onrealm.org/indydio/-/give/covid19)

Governance and program committees of fewer than 10 people may consider meeting in person indoors while wearing masks and maintaining physical distancing but may also continue to meet online.

Consider gathering contact information from all worship and meeting attendees. Recording names will enable the Health Department to more quickly trace, test and quarantine people who may have been exposed to COVID-19 if an attendee is later found to have had the virus at the time they were present. Advance registration for services will ease the process of collecting contact information.

Standards

Everyone at church gatherings must wear masks.

Until the risks of singing and playing wind instruments are better understood as a means of transmission, singing and the use of wind instruments in indoor services are not permitted at this time. This includes choral singing, congregational singing, singing by cantors and soloists and chanting by the presider. Consider how to make use of other instruments, recordings, and artistic offerings to God. We will continue to review the research and update these guidelines.

If no congregation is present, a soloist and up to five accompanists may record indoors when there is at least 25-plus feet distance between each musician, and the musicians and their instruments are masked.

Limited singing and playing wind instruments outdoors is permitted when a soloist or small ensemble are generously distanced 10-plus feet from each other and at least that distance from the congregation. Vocalists should be masked, and woodwind instruments covered to minimize dispersal of droplets. Less risky alternatives such as handbells, strings, percussion, pianos and organs are preferred.

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Social distance of 6 feet or more must be observed in seating arrangements. Physical contact is not permitted at the peace.

No offering basket or plate may be passed.

Greeters must not make physical contact at the entrance of the church by welcoming people with a handshake or a hug or by taking their temperature.

In-person coffee hours are prohibited until further notice.

A WORD ON THE EUCHARIST

The diocese strongly recommends that congregations use the rites for Morning Prayer, Ante-Communion or Spiritual Communion rather than offering the Holy Eucharist when we first return to our churches. If a church feels compelled to hold a Eucharist, please see [Appendix 1](#) with guidance from the Diocese of Chicago on accommodations for Eucharist.

WEDDINGS AND FUNERALS

Weddings and funerals can occur while adhering to the guidelines provided in this document.

BAPTISMS

If baptism is necessary during the reopening period, the priest should use these guidelines developed by the Diocese of Chicago:

- The service of Baptism should proceed as normal through the blessing of the water. The presider can bless the water but should not touch the water as the rubrics say.
- In the spirit of the BCP provision for Emergency Baptism (BCP, p. 313), Bishop Jennifer recommends that parents both administer the water and anoint their child.
- In the case of adult baptism, another adult in the pandemic pod of the candidate should administer the water and the priest anoint with oil.
- Following the baptism, the presider continues with the welcome of the newly baptized (BCP, p. 308).

FEEDING MINISTRIES

Ministries responding to food insecurity or medical support may continue using physical distancing guidelines and other practices suitable for the particular ministry. Requirements for group size, physical distancing, sanitation and use of masks must be followed.

We advise that distribution ministries limit time spent inside the building and allow for outside or curbside service.

Any food distribution must be to-go or served by a person using gloves. Buffets are prohibited.

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VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL AND MISSION TRIPS

We recommend that you not offer in-person summer programming, including Vacation Bible Schools and mission trips. Not only has it become clear the virus poses a clear risk to children, but children involved in group activities may also infect more vulnerable family members. We advise that congregations consider providing an online or no-touch drop off at-home activities.

Notes

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Appendix 1: Eucharist and Baptism¹

FOR PRIESTS PRESIDING AT EUCHARIST

- Bread and wine should be brought to the table by the presider. Presider sets their own table and only presider should be at table.
- Pour only a small amount of wine in chalice to be consumed at end of service when unused hosts are consumed. No wine should be distributed. Use hosts instead of homemade bread. Use small presider host.
- Only have presider host directly in front of you during consecration. Have ciborium of hosts for congregants to the side and consider covering the elements being consecrated.
- Think through how you will minimize person-to-person contact for administering the sacrament; how you will sanitize and re-sanitize before and while administering the sacrament; and how you will orchestrate your movements. Please remember that according to The Book of Common Prayer rubrics, consecration can be accomplished with a minimum of gestures and touching of elements.
- Create directional signage and instructions for how to receive communion.
- Communicants should receive host while still wearing mask and consume host as they return to their seats.

PRESIDING AT BAPTISM

- The service of Baptism should proceed as normal through the blessing of the water. The presider can bless the water but should not touch the water as the rubrics say.
- In the spirit of the BCP provision for Emergency Baptism (BCP, p. 313), Bishop Jennifer recommends that parents both administer the water and anoint their child.
- In the case of adult baptism, another adult in the pandemic pod of the candidate should administer the water and the priest anoint with oil.
- Following the baptism, the presider continues with the welcome of the newly baptized (BCP, p. 308).

¹ Courtesy of the Diocese of Chicago

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Appendix 2: Facilities Use Agreement

This Agreement is entered into this _____ day of _____, _____ by and between _____ and _____ of _____

NAME OF CHURCH

GROUP

CITY & STATE OF GROUP

In consideration of the mutual promises and conditions contained herein, Church and Group agree as follows:

1. GRANT OF LICENSE

Church grants Group a license to use the premises as follow:

A. Description of Premises

B. Personal Property/Resources (if any)

C. Purpose(s)

D. Meeting Date(s) and Time(s)

2. TERM OF LICENSE

This License shall be effective during the dates and times described above and continue for a period of one year. Group shall promptly vacate the premises after each planned meeting after completing its cleaning obligations described in Section 3C. This license may be suspended or terminated at any time.

1. TERMS OF USE

Group agrees that its use of the premises and facilities is subject to the following terms and conditions:



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- A. Group shall comply with all Church policies, rules and regulations, including the Church's COVID-19 Regathering Plan which is incorporated in full into this agreement.
- B. Group is responsible for cleaning the premises and personal property/resources following each meeting as follows:
- C. Group shall use only the premises and personal property/resources described in Section 1 above, only for the purposes stated in this Agreement. Group shall not use any other Church property and resource and shall be responsible for any damages, including increased cleaning costs to Church or any illness or injuries attributable to a COVID-19 exposure attributable to the unauthorized use of such property or resource.
- D. Group shall comply with all applicable municipal, county, state and federal laws and regulations.
- E. Group shall place no signs or temporary structure on the premises without obtaining advance written approval from Church. Any signs or temporary structures placed on the premises by Group shall be promptly removed at the end of the license term.
- F. Group shall not create any nuisance or disturb the quiet enjoyment of anyone utilizing adjacent or common premises and facilities.
- G. Group expressly acknowledges that the sale, possession, consumption and use of alcoholic beverages, tobacco and illegal drugs are forbidden on all Church premises.
- H. Group expressly acknowledges that the use and possession of weapons and firearms are forbidden on all Church premises.
- I. In the event Group's use of the premises and facilities involves participants who are minors (including the minor children of participants), then Group shall be responsible for the safety of all such minors and shall place such minors under the constant supervision and control of a responsible adult. Group shall be responsible for conducting suitable and thorough background checks on all persons supervising minor children. Group shall further be responsible for obtaining a properly completed and signed Authorization from the custodial parent(s) of any minor child who will participate in Group's use of the premises and facilities without the presence of his or her custodial parent(s).
- J. Group understands and agrees (i) that it is responsible for all actions of its participants and guests, (ii) that any person(s) in violation of the foregoing terms of use will be expected to immediately vacate the premises of Church, and (iii) that Church reserves the right to immediately terminate this Agreement and Group's use of the premises and facilities in the event of any violation of the foregoing terms of use without liability to Church.
- K. Surrender of Premises

Group shall surrender the premises and personal property described in Section 1 above, including all furniture and fixtures, upon termination of the license in the same condition as they were delivered upon commencement of the license, normal wear and tear expected. Group

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shall be responsible for the repair and/or replacement of any Church property/resource that is damaged or removed during the license term.

L. Indemnity

Church, its vestry, employees, agents, members, the Episcopal Diocese of Indianapolis and all affiliated organizations shall be free from all liability and claims for damages by reason of any injury allegedly sustained by any person or to any property that is in any way connected to Group's use of the premises during the license term or any extension thereof, including but not limited to exposure to COVID-19. Group expressly agrees to defend, indemnify and hold harmless Church, its vestry, employees, agents, members, the Episcopal Diocese of Indianapolis and all affiliated organizations, from and against any and all actions, suits, demands, losses claims and liabilities arising out of any such injuries or property loss however occurring, including reasonable actual attorneys' fees and all other costs of defending any claim.

M. Insurance

Group warrants that it carries general liability, workers compensation and property insurance in amounts sufficient to cover the risks and exposures resulting from its use of the premises pursuant to the terms of this Agreement. Specifically, Group warrants that it carries general liability insurance in the amount of not less than one million dollars (\$1,000,000) per occurrence, one million dollars (\$1,000,000) aggregate. Group further agrees to have Church and the Episcopal Diocese of Indianapolis named as an additional insured on Group's insurance policies and will provide a certificate of insurance to Church naming Church and the Episcopal Diocese of Indianapolis as an additional insured. In addition to any other remedies that may be available, Church may terminate this Agreement and retain any deposit paid by Group in the event such certificates are not provided by Group prior to the license commencement date.

N. Unforeseen Events

Church shall have no obligation to make its premises and facilities available to Group by reason of an act of God, inclement weather (as determined by Church), strike, illness, pandemic, any act or order of public authority, or other unforeseen event beyond the control of Church. In such an event, Church shall have no liability to Group.

O. General Provisions

1. No Warranty. Church does not warrant or represent that the premises and facilities are safe and suitable for Group's purposes. Group expressly acknowledges for itself and for all persons who will be utilizing the premises and facilities in connection with Group's purposes that Church is providing the premises and facilities on an "as is" basis.
2. No Waiver. No waiver by either party or any breach of this Agreement shall be deemed a waiver of any preceding or succeeding breach.
3. Assignment. This Agreement may not be assigned by either party.

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4. No Landlord-Tenant Relationship. Church and Group expressly agree that this Agreement shall not operate or be construed to create a Landlord-Tenant relationship between Church and Group under any circumstances.
5. Entire Agreement/Amendment. This Agreement and attachment constitute the entire Agreement between Church and Group, and there are no oral representations, warranties and promises pertaining to this Agreement that are not contained in writing in this Agreement. This Agreement may be modified or amended only by subsequent written agreement signed by duly authorized representatives of Church and Group.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, Church and Group have executed this Agreement as of the date first above written.

CHURCH

GROUP

SIGNATURE OF CHURCH REPRESENTATIVE

SIGNATURE

PRINTED NAME OF CHURCH REPRESENTATIVE

PRINTED NAME

TITLE

TITLE

