

Dear Members in Christ,

As you may be aware, we are experiencing a significant increase in COVID cases throughout Maryland. As we have previously stated, we will continue to adapt our processes in church to maximize the health and safety of our parishioners, as well as our clergy, in order to maintain our ability to provide “in person” services.

While we have done our utmost to minimize the risk of COVID spread during our indoor services (which last 1.5- 2 hours), it is difficult to estimate the potential risk of COVID transmission. Face Coverings are important to decrease the spread of COVID and we have learned a lot about the types of effective & ineffective face coverings.

According to the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists, an un-infected person with no face covering can be infected if within 6 feet of an infected person for 15 minutes. The time increases to 27 minutes if both are wearing a cloth covering and 60 minutes if both are wearing a surgical mask. This time increases to 25 hours if both are wearing a N95 FFR (non-fit tested).

<https://www.acgih.org/covid-19-fact-sheet-worker-resp/>

Based on the above information, and as a result of the recent spike in COVID cases, the following changes will be made effective immediately:

- We will be returning to maximum Social Distancing in the Church during Liturgy and all Services. Seating adjustments will be made to allow 6 feet of space in all directions between non-family/friend units.
- Moving forward, bandanas & gators **WILL NOT** be considered adequate face coverings for attending Divine Liturgy and other Services or events at the Church. It is recommended that N95 masks be used; however, any type of surgical or fitted “multi-layer” cloth masks will be appropriate. We will have a supply of surgical masks available in the Narthex for those not meeting the requirements.
- Our Church Hall has been reconfigured back to a “Chapel” type environment to be used as overflow with all seating set up for 6-foot distancing.
- Coffee Hour has been cancelled until further notice.
- We will continue the existing safety measures such as separate spoons for Communion, tongs for Prosfora, etc.
- We will continue to live-stream and, on Sunday, January 23rd, we will offer a “drive by” Communion & Blessing for those that are elderly or immune compromised or otherwise unable to attend “in-person services. Father Constantine will, weather permitting, provide Communion & Blessings to all that would like to receive it without having to get out of their vehicles. (Details will follow)
- We will resume Sunday School as previously scheduled.

Consistent with the information being provided, we expect these precautions to remain in effect for the next month or so. We understand that some parishioners may be unhappy with these adjustments and the resultant reduced seating, however our ultimate goal is to minimize the risk to our parishioners and, most importantly, our clergy in order to keep the doors open for “in-person” liturgy. We ask for your understanding and prayers.