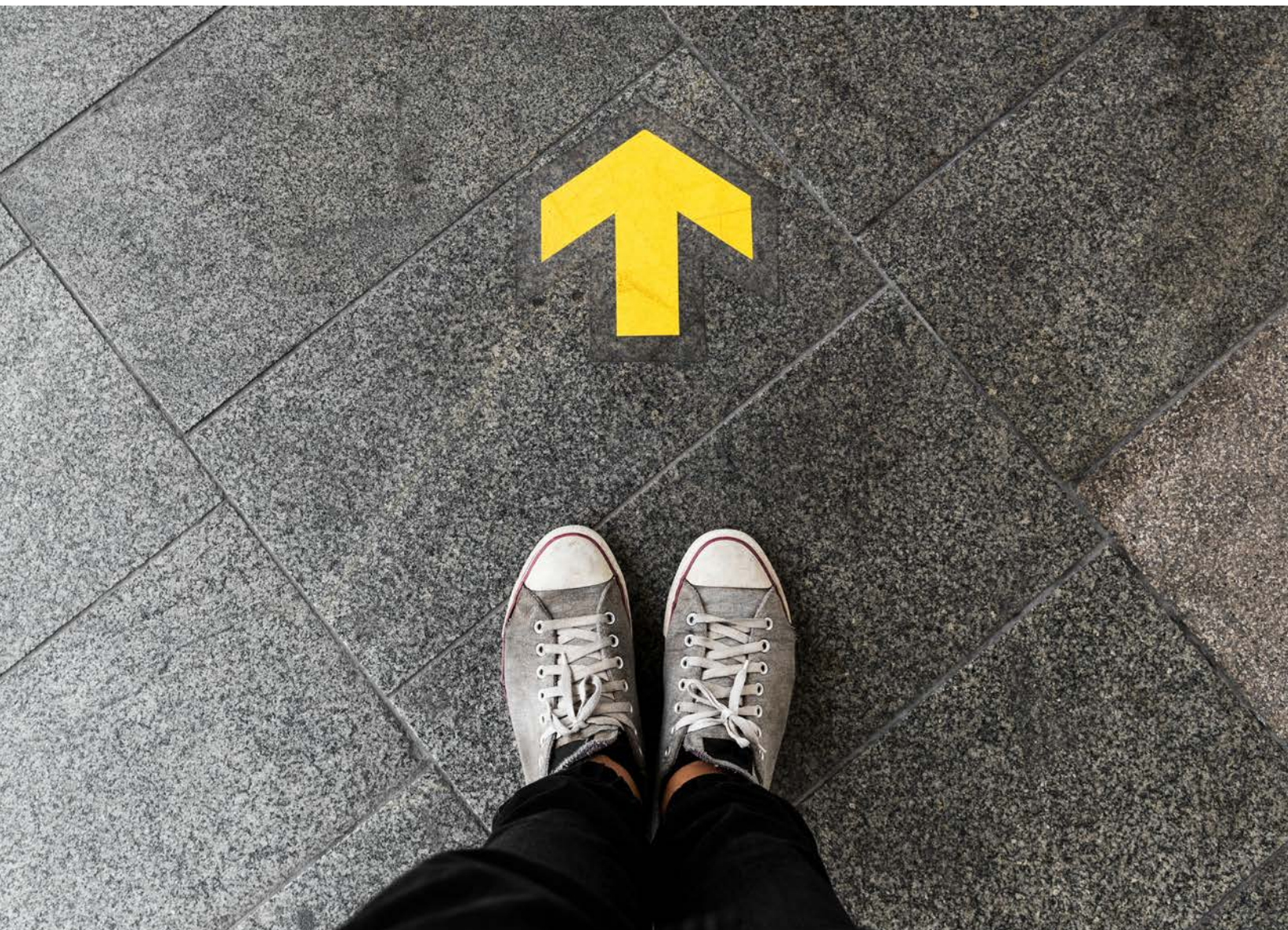




Catholic Diocese  
of Cleveland

# Guiding Principles for Parish Ministries During the Coronavirus Pandemic

FORWARD WITH CHRIST: A PATH TO RENEWING CATHOLIC LIFE



Prepared by

SECRETARIAT FOR PARISH LIFE AND DEVELOPMENT

*The Catholic Church has an all-embracing respect for the life, value, and dignity of every person. We have a responsibility to assure that ministry activities and environments are as safe as possible and conducive to growth and transformational encounters with Christ for all those we serve. Attention to this responsibility is an expression of our commitment to a consistent ethic of life.*

## **A Framework for Reflection**

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, we are at a new and unprecedented place. The pandemic has changed us as a society. Our experience of Church has also changed. Parish ministries must change as well. Ministry leaders should be intentional in the ways they serve the People of God during this time. We need to meet the challenges we encounter with hope, and be witnesses to God's love and compassion for all God's children.

The following questions are offered to help parish staffs, ministry leaders, and parish councils to discern how to respond as we continue to plan for the future of our respective ministries. We understand that this is a very difficult time for everyone. Please be assured of our prayers for you and your parish communities as we move forward and know that we are here to help you.

## Who We Serve



People of all ages can be infected by the new coronavirus (COVID-19). Older people and people with pre-existing medical conditions (such as obesity, asthma, diabetes, heart disease) appear to be more vulnerable to becoming severely ill with the virus. People of all ages should take steps to protect themselves and others from the virus, for example by following good hand hygiene, observing social distancing, and wearing face masks.

- Who will participate in this ministry activity? Will participating in this planned activity increase their risk level? How can the level of risk be reduced?
- How many people will participate? Can we reorganize this ministry activity into smaller groups?
- Are there any groups or individuals who have raised concerns about gathering for this parish ministry/event? How will those concerns be pastorally addressed?
- What steps will you take to protect yourself and others from the virus?
- How will other individuals within your family / parish / social circle be affected if you test positive for COVID-19?
- What is the communication process your parish / ministry will implement if someone in your parish / ministry group tests positive for COVID-19? (See the CDC recommendations for [when a staff member or congregant becomes sick](#).)
- Who in our local community did we overlook? Has the COVID situation helped us see those we had not noticed in the past? How can we welcome each of them into the community as we plan for the future?
- In what ways has COVID-19 highlighted the importance of serving those who are in crisis, especially those who are isolated, hurting and experiencing loss or grief?

## Where We Serve



Since we are celebrating public Masses in parishes, it is tempting to return to parish life as usual. However, we suggest pastors and ministry leaders prepare for a “both-and” rather than “either-or” scenario. Virtual meetings and other online programs should continue until such time as it is completely safe to return without restrictions.

- Is there an increase of COVID-19 cases in your county? Who is keeping track of current developments? In parishes that have members coming from very divergent geographic areas, how might you track developments according to parish census records of zip codes? How will you communicate that information to parish staff and ministry leaders?
- Does the parish have large enough spaces to maintain six feet of distance between individuals and are the areas well-ventilated?
- How do we create an environment that is clean and safe, but also welcoming, considerate and caring?
- What activities are taking place at the parish at the same time? Can any of the activities be offered virtually? Can any activity be rescheduled to limit the number of people at the parish at the same time?
- What are some of the benefits of offering this ministry activity virtually? What are the challenges and how can we address them?

**Please note:** Many parishes in our diocese do not have the capacity to gather in person and maintain the safety requirements on their own parish campus. We ask those parishes blessed with large gathering spaces to consider ways that they might be of assistance in solidarity with these smaller communities.

## How We Serve

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Viral pandemics are a battle of human psychology. There are no quick, technical fixes. We also do not yet have effective medical treatments or a vaccine for COVID-19. This means we must be better informed, more aware of our attitudes, and open to changing our ways of thinking and our behaviors in order to respond safely to our situation.



- How do you feel about the changes you have personally experienced and that continue to take place? What steps have you taken to adjust to these changes in your life?
- What attitudes and behaviors have you witnessed in your faith community in response to the changes people have experienced? How can you guide your faith community in adjusting to the changes during this time and promote an environment of care and compassion for all, especially those most vulnerable?
- What skills have been required during this time and how might they help in the future? How might you continue to develop these skills among the staff, ministry leaders, and / or parish councils?
- What new ways of doing ministry that we adopted during the pandemic should we continue?
- Do any new leadership roles emerge as a result of envisioning new ministry opportunities following COVID-19?

## Why We Serve

*"I dream of a missionary option, that is a missionary impulse, capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today's world."  
(Pope Francis, EG 27)*

Prayerfully discerning what ministry will look like in the future, we must keep our focus on the purpose, intent, and vision of the missionary impulse of the Gospel. This requires a creative, collaborative, and authentic approach as we nurture relationships and empower others to faithfully respond to their baptismal call to missionary discipleship.

- Why are we doing this particular program? What pastoral needs are being met by this ministry activity?
- How can we do this differently, safely, and creatively?
- With whom are conversations needed in order to foster a collaborative effort and envision new ministry opportunities?
- What community partnerships (with businesses, organizations, other churches/ministries, non-profits, community leaders, other community service providers) are we developing now, or should we be developing, that will be the springboard to new ministry opportunities post-pandemic?



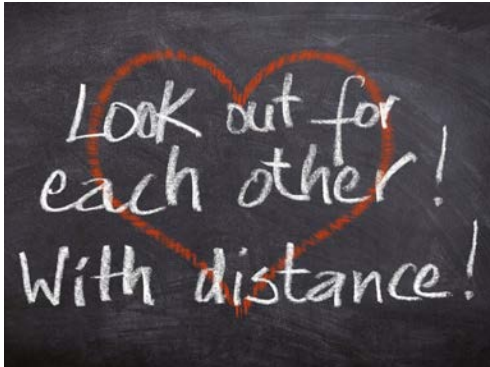
# General Safety Guidelines

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- The location must be cleaned and sanitized before and after each ministry activity. This includes the entrance and exit, the meeting room, restroom facilities and any other area that a participant may come into contact with.
- Entry and exit doors are to be adequately designated and monitored to ensure that physical distancing is observed.
- Entry and exit doors should be propped open during entry and exiting.
- Hand sanitizer should be available at the entrance and in the room where the activity is being held. Masks should be made available as well.
- All present for the activity are required to wear masks. The facilitator should maintain the appropriate physical distance from all participants and may remove their mask when speaking.
- The location being used for the activity must be large enough to allow 6 feet of physical distancing for all participants. Follow state, local, and diocesan guidelines for maximum number of people present at in-person activities.
- Registration in advance is strongly encouraged for activities where more than 10 people are expected to attend. No walk-in participants.
- The doors will be opened 15 minutes prior to the start of the activity.
- Participants are required to maintain 6 feet of social distancing when entering the building and meeting space.
- There will be no sign-in sheet such that people have to queue up close to one another and touch a common document. Instead, the facilitator should take roll call as people enter the room or any time prior to beginning the activity if it is necessary to confirm attendance.
- If handouts are to be distributed, consider placing the handouts on the tables/chairs prior to the ministry activity. Remind participants to take all materials home.
- If provided, food and beverages should be in individual packaging that is easily picked up by each individual and disposed of properly. When retrieving food, remind participants to avoid touching items and putting them back.
- It is strongly recommended that no bus trips or overnight activities be planned for this period of time.
- Regularly check for updates on the [diocesan website](#), your county health department website, the [CDC website](#), and the [Ohio Department of Health website](#).
- Please continue to pray for all of those affected by this pandemic. Pope Francis composed a special [Prayer to Mary](#) for this very purpose.

## Additional Resources

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### Ministry Resources

- [Forward with Christ: A Path to Renewing Catholic Life](#)
- [Relaunch Church: Key Questions to Prepare for a New Season of Ministry \(Aspen Group\)](#)
- [Returning to Sacred Spaces Amid COVID-19: A Cleveland Clinic Resource Guide](#)

### Online Meetings Practices

- [Online Meeting Technology](#)
- [Zoom Meeting Basics](#)
- [Tips for Zoom Breakout Rooms](#)
- [Simple Facilitation Techniques](#)
- [Tips for Virtual Facilitation \(e-Book\)](#)
- [Resources for Online Facilitation](#)
- [Tips for Online Retreats and Meetings](#)