



Epiphany Parish – Walpole, Massachusetts
COVID-19 Regathering Information

June 2021

As you know, this year has been an unusual one in the life of our parish. Since the beginning, God's commandment to 'Love your neighbor as yourself' has driven our decisions about how we function as a church community during this pandemic. In March 2020, we stopped holding in-person worship in order to love our neighbors. In August 2020 we allowed for outdoor worship in order to gather while keeping everyone safe. When needed, we have returned to virtual worship throughout the year. Now, as we continue to regather, our decisions about how that regathering will take place will continue to be driven by our love for each other and our community.

Even now that much of life is returning to a greater sense of normalcy, for the time being Epiphany Parish will continue to have some restrictions in place. **These limitations are temporary** and will allow us to transition to allowing indoor worship, meetings, and other parish events. The vestry will continue to monitor the circumstances throughout the summer and will make changes to this plan as is appropriate. We invite you to review our parish protocols below. These protocols were created by our regathering team and approved by our vestry. Procedures that have changed from our regathering plan that was put in place last summer are listed in **Bold type**.

What we've learned in the past few weeks is that right now folks fall on a wide spectrum of comfort levels in terms of regathering. Some people will think we are moving too fast, others will think we are moving too slow. Some people have been vaccinated while other people have not been vaccinated (or are not yet fully vaccinated). The youngest members of our parish are not eligible to become vaccinated. Some people are itching to return to the way things were while others have a lot of anxiety and concerns about returning to in-person gathering. We created these plans keeping everyone in mind and allowing more options for gathering while keeping the most vulnerable in our community safe.

Outdoor Worship

- If you do not feel well, have any new onset symptoms of COVID-19, or have tested positive for COVID-19, please do not come to the church.
- All congregants who do not live in the same household are to be distanced from each other by at least six feet.
- **Masks are not required outdoors for people who have been fully vaccinated. Following CDC guidance, people who are not yet fully vaccinated are expected to wear masks outdoors.** Clergy and Lay Eucharistic Ministers will wear masks during the Eucharistic Prayer and while distributing Communion.
- Unvaccinated children 2 – 5 years of age may wear face coverings at parent/guardian's discretion.
- For outdoor gatherings, parishioners are encouraged to bring their own chairs. Some disinfected chairs will be available.
- Childcare and Sunday School will not be available at this time.
- **Congregational singing is allowed outdoors as long as proper social distancing is maintained.**
- Communion will be distributed as wafers only.
- The Peace is to be exchanged without physical touch (using a bow, wave or just words) and while maintaining social distancing.
- **Outdoor Coffee Hour is permitted. Food and drinks should be individually packaged with no communal serving utensils.**
- **Worship will continue to be available via telephone and live stream** every Sunday morning so that parishioners who are unable to or choose not to attend in-person may continue to join us virtually.

Indoor Worship

- **Sunday morning indoor worship will begin on June 27th, 2021.**
- If you do not feel well, have any new onset symptoms of COVID-19, or have tested positive for COVID-19, please do not come to church.
- At this time, we are allowed to have up to 60% of the church's capacity present during an indoor service, as long as physical distance of 6 feet can be maintained between households. **To ensure social distancing, the congregation will be seated in every other pew. At this time, advance registration is not required.**
- All congregants who do not live in the same household are to be distanced from each other by at least six feet.
- **When attending worship, masks must be worn when entering and exiting the building by all. Once seated, people who are fully vaccinated may remove their facemask. People who are not yet fully vaccinated are expected to wear masks.**
- Children 2 – 5 years of age may wear face coverings at parent/guardian's discretion.
- Childcare and Sunday School will not be available at this time.
- **During this stage of gathering, we will continue to refrain from indoor congregational singing. Singing may be performed by a masked, distanced, and vaccinated choir.**
- Communion will be distributed as wafers only.
- The Peace is to be exchanged without physical touch (using a bow, wave or just words) and while maintaining social distancing.
- **Worship will continue to be available via telephone and live stream** every Sunday morning so that parishioners who are unable to or choose not to attend in-person may join us virtually.

Parish Fellowship and Meetings

- **All parish small groups, events, and meetings are now allowed to meet in-person either indoors or outdoors at Epiphany Parish.**
- **At parish gatherings other than worship, masks are not required to be worn indoors by people who are fully vaccinated, however they are strongly encouraged in the common areas of the church, especially when social distancing cannot be maintained. Following CDC guidance, people who are not yet fully vaccinated are expected to wear masks indoors.**
- **Masks are not required outdoors for people who have been fully vaccinated. People who are not yet fully vaccinated are expected to wear masks outdoors at parish events.**
- **Social distancing of at least 6 feet is expected when the vaccination status of everyone in the group is unknown or if not everyone present is fully vaccinated.**
- Groups will be encouraged to open all windows and doors during meetings, as possible. All groups are responsible for ensuring that all doors and windows are closed and locked at the end of their meeting.
- Everyone entering the building must sign in with their name, phone number, and times entering and exiting the building. Meeting leadership must keep sign-in sheets with contact information for 2 months to help assist the Walpole Health department if contact tracing needed.
- Members will inform meeting leadership and the Walpole Board of Public Health (508-660-7320) if they are diagnosed with COVID-19 and have entered the Epiphany Parish building within two weeks of developing symptoms.
- In addition to informing the Walpole Board of Public Health, meeting leadership must inform the parish office if an attendee is diagnosed with COVID-19 and has entered the building within two weeks of developing symptoms. (508-668-2353 or office.epiphany@verizon.net)

Community Groups

- **Community groups may make their own decisions about safety protocols but are expected to follow all CDC recommendations and state requirements.**
- Groups will be encouraged to open all windows and doors during meetings, as possible. All groups are responsible for ensuring that all doors and windows are closed and locked at the end of their meeting.
- Everyone entering the building must sign in with their name, phone number, and times entering and exiting the building. Meeting leadership must keep sign-in sheets with contact information for 2 months to help assist the Walpole Health department if contact tracing needed.
- Members will inform meeting leadership and the Walpole Board of Public Health (508-660-7320) if they are diagnosed with COVID-19 and have entered the Epiphany Parish building within two weeks of developing symptoms.
- In addition to informing the Walpole Board of Public Health, meeting leadership must inform the parish office if an attendee is diagnosed with COVID-19 and has entered the building within two weeks of developing symptoms. (508-668-2353 or office.epiphany@verizon.net)

Visiting the Church/Office

- **When visiting the parish other than for worship, masks are not required to be worn indoors by people who are fully vaccinated, however they are strongly encouraged in the common areas of**

the church, especially when social distancing cannot be maintained. Following CDC guidance, people who are not yet fully vaccinated are expected to wear masks indoors.

- Children 2 – 5 years of age may wear face coverings at parent/guardian’s discretion.
- Social distancing of 6-feet or more is encouraged.
- There is a sign-in sheet inside the driveway side door. All visitors must sign in and provide their:
 - name,
 - phone number, and
 - entry and exit times.
- Sign-in sheets will be kept in the parish office for 2 months and will be shared with appropriate health officials as required.

Workplace Safety Plan

- Employees will not come to work if they are experiencing new onset symptoms of COVID-19 or have tested positive for COVID-19.
- **Employees who are fully vaccinated are not required to wear masks while working during the week. On Sunday morning, during meetings, and at parish fellowship events, fully vaccinated employees are required to follow all parish protocols specified above. Any employee who is not yet vaccinated is expected to wear a facemask at work.**
- Employees must inform Rev. Christen Mills if they have a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 and have entered the building within 14 days of developing symptoms or receiving a diagnosis.
- All employees have been trained in the above procedures and have signed the ‘Epiphany Parish COVID-19 Employee Covenant’ agreeing to follow these procedures.

Pastoral Care and Life Events

- **In-person Pastoral Care visits may resume**, following all diocesan and institutional guidelines.
- **Baptism, Weddings, and funerals may be held either outdoors or indoors**, while adhering to all parish and diocesan policies regarding worship.

Plan for Notifying Local Board of Health

- All sign-in sheets and attendance lists will be kept in the parish office for 2 months and provided to health officials as required. Epiphany Parish will work with our local board of public health and assist them with all contact tracing requests.
- If any parishioner, staff member, or visitor to Epiphany Parish tests positive for COVID-19 within 14 days of their most recent visit to the church building, we will notify our local board of health.
- Care will be taken to protect the privacy of any parishioner, staff member, or visitor’s health information.

Updating These Protocols

- **These protocols may be updated at anytime by the Executive Committee of Epiphany Parish.**

Walpole Health Department Contact Information:

Phone: 508-660-7209

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Health Director: **Melissa Ranieri** E-mail: mmarinelli@walpole-ma.gov Phone: 508-660-7320