



Epiphany Parish – Walpole, Massachusetts
COVID-19 Regathering Information

August 2021

Changes to this policy since June 2021 are in BOLD type.

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.

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.

We look forward to gathering with you again and thank you for keeping love for this community and for those who are most vulnerable at the center of all that we do.

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.
- **If you have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 please do not come to church until you have received a negative Covid test or until it has been 14 days since your exposure and you have not developed symptoms.**
- 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 **under 2 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.
- Congregational singing is allowed outdoors if 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.
- **If you have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 please do not come to church until you have received a negative COVID test or it has been 14 days since your exposure and you have not developed symptoms.**
- 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 in the building by everyone over the age of 2, regardless of vaccination status.**
- Children under 2 years of age may wear face coverings at parent/guardian's discretion.
- **Singing is allowed indoors as long as masks are worn by everyone and social distancing measures are in place.**
- 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 all indoor parish gatherings face masks are required to be worn by everyone over the age of 2, regardless of vaccination status. Masks may be removed only when working alone in one of the parish offices or when working alone in another room in the building.**
- 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 by household is required at all parish events.**
- **At this time Nursery Care is not allowed.**
- **Sunday School will be allowed starting September 12th. Masks must be worn during Sunday School by teachers, children, and all volunteers/visitors both indoors and outdoors.**
- **At Sunday School social distancing of 6ft or more indoors or 3ft or more outdoors is required.**
- **COVID vaccination is required of all persons, clergy or lay, who are engaged in ministry with the most vulnerable, including children ages 12 and under, homebound or immune-compromised persons, and those in hospitals and care facilities.**
- 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

- **Masks are required to be worn by everyone over the age of 2 in the parish building, regardless of vaccination status.**
- **Children 2 and under may wear face coverings at parent/guardian's discretion.**
- Social distancing of 6-feet or more by household is required.
- 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.
- **All Employees must wear a face mask in the church building, regardless of vaccination status. Employees may remove their facemask only if they are working alone in one of the offices or alone in another room in the building.**
- 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 updated '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

Fax: 508-660-6345

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