



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF ATLANTA

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΑΤΛΑΝΤΑΣ

May 22, 2020

My Beloved co-celebrants in the Lord, Esteemed Parish Council Presidents and members, Philoptochos Presidents and members, Reverend Monastics and faithful,

Χριστός Ανεστή! Christ is Risen!

I greet you my beloved with love and joy in the name of our Resurrected Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! I pray that this message finds you well, as we prepare to re-open our churches.

This past week we hosted conference calls via Zoom with all the parishes in our God protected Metropolis. I offer my sincere gratitude to all who participated in these meetings as they were very beneficial, not only for those who attended, but for myself as well. In those meetings, we were able to review, assess the regulations of each State and see how we can best celebrate our Church Services in each location. From our discussions, we received valuable information to share with all of you.

Therefore, in addition to the guidelines stated in the letter dated [May 13, 2020 \(available here\)](#), please consider these supplementary guidelines as well.

Supplementary Guidelines to Consider before Re-opening

- **Signage** – [Click here](#) for suggested attached signage that can guide parishioners upon arrival to church, [and here](#) for signage to prepare them their visit.
- **Suggested Re-opening check List** – Suggested Re-opening Check List is available [here](#).
- **Insurance Liability** - Check on your parish liability insurance policy for coverage of COVID-19.
- **Communication** - Reinforce through all possible parish forms of communication the requirements each parishioner must follow in order to attend in-person worship. Parishioners must know that there will be no exceptions as we must all think not only of ourselves, but our neighbors as well, as the Lord instructs us to, “...*Love your neighbor as yourself*” (Matthew 19:19).
- **Volunteers** – Create and maintain a team of volunteers to assist the Parish Council with implementation of procedures for cleaning and maintaining the buildings as well as assisting in the services.
- **Wearing Masks** – Although local laws may not require masks to be worn, everyone attending services must wear a mask from age 2 and above. ([view an example of a company providing face masks \[and hand sanitizer\]](#)).
- If a parishioner refuses to wear a mask, is uncomfortable wearing one or experiences difficulty breathing while wearing one during the service, this may be an indication that they are part of the vulnerable population and should remain home, and the clergy will make the appropriate pastoral accommodations for them to receive the sacraments if they so choose.

- **Checking-in and/or Registering for In-person Worship** - For everyone's safety it is important to create attendance logs for parishioners who attend a specific service. The Parish Council should designate a creative way to check-in parishioners to avoid contact with them. Some possibilities include: pre-sign up for services, print out list of people and check off, use an electronic device, determining what works best for your community. A designated person may take the personal information from those attending the service if the parish does not have their personal information. ([Click here to view an example of an infrared thermometer](#))
- **Candle Lighting** – As an alternative to having someone light candles (tapers) for the parishioners, a member or members of the Parish Council, wearing masks and gloves may give to each parishioner the candles (tapers) that they may light themselves.
- **Chanting/Singing** - If your parish has more than one Chant Stand, each stand should have only ONE Chanter or if no chanter exists ONE Choir Member may sing. NO choir groups are allowed in any circumstance at this time until further notice. ([Click here for an informational article about choirs and the possible spread of COVID-19.](#))
- **Offering Extra Worship Services** - Extra Divine Liturgies may be celebrated on the evenings of Monday to Friday or Saturday mornings, in addition to weekday feasts to accommodate the parishioners.
- **Elderly and Vulnerable Population** - A Divine Liturgy designated for specific groups of people such as the elderly and vulnerable population may also be considered.
- **Holy Communion** - The church is permitted to remain open for a brief time period following the Divine Liturgy to commune the faithful who are not able to be present in the church proper i.e. in designated overflow space (church hall, parked cars, etc.).
- Holy Communion will continue to be distributed in the traditional manner.
- **Communion Cloths** - The red communion cloths (μάκτρα) will be held underneath the person's chin **but not touch the chin** by the assigned adult helpers. The communicant may not touch it and absolutely no wiping of mouths.
- **Outdoor Services** - Outdoor Divine Liturgies are permitted as long as social distancing procedures, etc. are observed and followed.
- **HVAC Systems** - HVAC filters should be changed frequently. UV lighting may be added to return air on HVAC systems in order to assist in destroying airborne viruses.
- **Banquet and Rental Space** - Church banquet facilities can be re-opened as permitted by local law for rental purposes only, not for ministry gatherings, etc.
- **In Case of an Outbreak** - If an outbreak does occur, follow CDC guidelines for tracing, call the people that were attending that specific service and have them contact their local healthcare provider. The parish should also contact the local healthcare authorities as well as the Metropolis.
- **Parishioners who have had COVID-19** - Parishioners who have been sick with coronavirus should have a written medical doctor's statement that they no longer test positive before they can return to in person worship services.

Keep in mind

- No offering trays will be passed during the services. A place to accept offerings will be provided in the Narthex upon entering or leaving. If your community has set up online giving, people should be directed to visit the website to make an online offering.

- Please follow infections and death trends due to COVID-19 in your local area and take them into consideration when deciding your re-opening plans. ([Click here for an article from the CDC on the major ways COVID is transmitted.](#))
- As for the Memorials, please write the names of your deceased for the clergy to pray for their souls (without Koliva).
- For the Saturday of Souls specifically (June 6, 2020), email, mail or give only the names of the departed to the clergy. Only one tray of Koliva, being prepared by the community, will be offered on behalf of those who have departed, and it will not be distributed to parishioners.
- Artoclasia (Blessing of Five Loaves) Services will be celebrated as normal.

Before you resolve to re-open, I remind you to convene your local parish council meetings, taking into consideration [the guidelines issued on May 13, 2020](#), these supplemental guidelines, along with the National, State and local regulations, orders and directives.

Finally, I continue to ask you, clergy and laity, to pray to our Almighty God that He may *“accept our prayer; grant us remission of our transgressions; protect us under the shelter of Your wings; drive away from us every enemy and adversary; grant peace to our life; Lord, have mercy on us and on Your world; and save our souls as a good and loving God.”* (Service of the Artoclasia)

With this, I remain faithfully and greet you once again with Χριστός Ανεστή! Christ is Risen!



+ALEXIOS
Metropolitan of Atlanta