



# The Episcopal Diocese of San Joaquin

The Central Third of California

October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2020

Dear Sisters and Brothers of EDSJ,

From the early beginnings of this horrific pandemic, I have been joined by diocesan staff, leaders and clergy colleagues in expressing the ways in which our responses amid this crisis speak of who we are and to WHOM we belong. We have consistently identified that this is yet another opportunity to grow deeper into the Beloved Community we are **Called to be...** This has been no more evident than the urging to take care of one another (the other) by taking care of ourselves. This other-self care has and continues to involve sheltering-in-place, wearing masks and gloves and the like. We have been clear that our identity, our very reason to be, requires that we put public health over economics and theological-communal responsibility over individual rights. We have been clear that the need to reflect God in the *Way of Love* could not be more necessary than in our present contexts and circumstances. And we have been clear the *Jesus Movement* must inform what we do and how we do it during these days of COVID-19.

As we move closer to reopening, the aforementioned expression of identity and reflection of faith must not diminish. The guidelines before us are practical measures to ensure (to the extent we can) continued safety, health and wellness for all. When reopening occurs, we urge you to adhere to the guidelines and continue to frame them with words of faith, hope and love. We also encourage you to exercise caution, care and patience as we move into becoming church in yet another way.

I wish to thank the contributors of our Diocesan Guidelines. Participants on the Working Group were:

Canon Anna Carmichael (Dio Staff)

Ms. Barbara Vassell, Communicable Disease Manager, Stanislaus County Public Health (Modesto)

Rev'd Luis Rodriguez (Bakersfield)

Rev'd Peter Ackerman (Lodi)

Rev'd Jim McDonald (Fresno)

Bishop David Rice (Dio Staff)

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink, starting with a cross symbol and followed by a stylized name.

The Rt. Rev. David C. Rice

## Towards Reopening

As we enter into cooler seasonal weather and the state has amended its guidelines to a tiered, color-coded designation system for each county, the COVID-19 Task Force and the Office of the Bishop offer these guidelines as a way to begin re-engaging our congregations in person.

The decision when to reopen churches to in-person worship therefore needs to take into account **State and Local health conditions and guidelines, what color tier they are in (a minimum of Red tier is required for in-person worship) and then weigh them against the risks for individual congregations.**

### Things the church must consider before opening:

- This is not a “one size fits all” model, but rather a roadmap for congregations to make decisions about how to move into re-entry. The first possible date for in-person worship is **November 8, 2020.**
- Congregations should **FIRST** consider the option of gathering outside, provided that the weather and space allows for a group to gather. If gathering outside, the Outdoor Worship Protocols must be followed.
- **A SECOND OPTION** if weather and space do not allow the congregation to gather outside, a congregation should consider meeting in their parish hall if it is easier to create more space for distanced seating (at this time, 25% of occupancy of space and/or up to 100 people are allowed). If gathering inside, the Indoor Worship Protocols must be followed.
- **FINALLY** if the parish hall does not offer enough room for distanced seating, the clergy/congregation may elect to gather in the sanctuary (25% of occupancy of space and/or up to 100 people are allowed), provided they follow the Indoor Worship Protocols.
- Prior to regathering (whether indoors or outdoors), clergy/wardens must complete the appropriate reopening checklist and submit to the Office of the Bishop.
- If at any point the county returns to “PURPLE” or people do not follow the protocols set out by the Office of the Bishop, the congregation will need to return to virtual worship until it is safe to return to in-person worship.
- For those clergy who feel that they are at increased risk for severe illness from the virus that causes COVID-19, have symptoms or are sick, virtual worship is strongly recommended.
- For those laity who feel that they are increased risk for severe illness from the virus that causes COVID-19 or are experiencing symptoms or sickness, we ask that they stay home and participate in virtual worship
- For those clergy who DO want to proceed with outdoor, in person worship, some form of virtual worship (either a live stream or a pre-recorded worship) is required.
- Superspreading Events have been linked to religious services, singing and choir practice!
- The congregation’s profile (age of parishioners, health of parishioners, as well as other user groups)
- The congregation’s willingness to follow public health guidelines (spacing, wearing a mask/gloves, refraining from hugging/handshaking both in and out of church)
- Physical space of facility (is there enough room to practice social distancing, would it be better to have worship outside, can the facility be cleaned and disinfected between gatherings/meetings)

After careful consideration of recommendations by various health experts, governmental authorities, and the policies of other Dioceses, the Bishop and Diocesan Council have adopted the following Stages for reopening of the Dioceses churches:

#### EDSJ Preparing for Outdoor Worship Protocols:

- ❖ Prior to regathering, the clergy/wardens will need to complete the Preparing for Outdoor Worship reopening checklist and submit it to the Office of the Bishop (at the conclusion of this document)
- ❖ Using appropriate tape or chalk, mark areas outdoors where people may be seated, accounting for social distancing of a minimum of six (6) feet. This may limit the total number of parishioners that you can accommodate per worship service; pre-registration may be required (<https://reopen.church/>).
- ❖ Determine what audio/visual equipment may be needed (is your church on a busy street...if so, separate microphones will be needed for each reader/speaker; they will need to wear masks throughout the worship service)
- ❖ Prepare a bulletin which can be downloaded electronically by parishioners in advance. If paper is used, it must not be shared between gatherings, but rather recycled after each gathering.
- ❖ Have masks and hand sanitizer available in various locations for parishioners
- ❖ Prepare signs for:
  - Masks are required
  - Social distancing of at least 6 feet must be observed
  - Bathrooms (and buildings) remain closed,
  - Programs such as bible study/adult education/Sunday school remain online only
- ❖ Communicate with congregation about protocols, expectations and pre-registration

#### EDSJ Outdoor Worship Protocols:

- ❖ We will begin experimenting with outdoor worship by following the Morning Prayer liturgy or Liturgy of the Word for a minimum of 2 Sundays before moving to Eucharist (it is strongly recommended that communities worship together for 4 weeks before moving to Eucharist to ensure that a super-spreading event has not resulted in regathering)
- ❖ Singing is not allowed; pre-recorded music is preferred
- ❖ If it is deemed safe for us to continue with outdoor worship (no superspreading events), we will begin experimenting with Eucharist in an outdoor setting
  - altar may be set by the deacon who stands alone at the altar and then returns to seat after setting the table
  - distribution of bread only (commercial) by priest who circulates around to parishioners
  - clergy and receiving parishioners must wear masks during distribution until the clergy person moves to the next parishioner/household group
- ❖ Parishioners & clergy will need to:
  - wear masks covering their nose & mouth throughout the service
  - bring their own chair or towel/blanket for seating
  - refrain from handshakes/hugs
  - practice social distancing of at least 6 feet
  - depart the church campus as soon as the worship service is concluded

EDSJ Preparing for Indoor Worship Protocols:  
(25% of occupancy and/or up to 100 people)

- ❖ Prior to regathering, the clergy/wardens will need to complete the Preparing for Indoor Worship reopening checklist and submit it to the Office of the Bishop (at the conclusion of this document)
- ❖ Remove all non-essential items from the rooms so that there are fewer touchable surfaces
- ❖ Remove hymnals, prayer books, information cards, pens/pencils, etc from pews
- ❖ Have facilities professionally cleaned and disinfected prior to opening (including pews, bathrooms, doorknobs/handles, light switches, railings and microphones)
- ❖ Ensure that HVAC system has clean filters and is working properly; reusable filters which may be cleaned are recommended. Your HVAC professional may suggest the cleaning of ducts as well.
- ❖ Designate teams in each congregation (or designate a budget item for professional cleaners) to clean and disinfect before and after each worship service or gathering
- ❖ Clergy or Sr Warden coordinate with groups (both in the church and outside groups) to review cleaning protocols, social distancing expectations, utilizing self-screening checklists, and that masks are mandatory
- ❖ Establish guidelines for church staff/volunteers to rotate on site presence during the week (cleaning protocols, social distancing, masks, temperature checks/self-screening)
- ❖ Create signage and post at all entry ways or high traffic areas about requirements for wearing masks and refraining from shaking hands/hugging, as well as if people are sick to stay home
- ❖ Create signage and post at all entry ways or high traffic areas that includes local health department information.
- Develop sign in sheets for parishioners and visitors that includes name, email and phone numbers to expedite contact tracing should there be an exposure (free online pre-registration tool: <https://reopen.church/>)
- ❖ Empower greeters to politely, but firmly enforce the safe gathering protocols
- ❖ Decide whether or not to open restrooms during worship/meetings
- ❖ Be prepared to roll-back if needed

EDSJ Indoor Worship Protocols, Phase 1:  
(25% of occupancy and/or up to 100 people)

- ❖ We will begin experimenting with in-person worship by following the Morning Prayer or Liturgy of the Word for a minimum of 14 days, but 30 days is strongly recommended before moving to Eucharist to ensure that a super-spreading event has not resulted in regathering.
  - Worship services may need to be staggered in order to accommodate larger congregations (<https://reopen.church/>)
    - Leave room for visitors!
  - Cleaning and disinfecting of space after each gathering
- ❖ Outside user groups may meet at 25% of occupancy of meeting room and/or up to 100 people if they follow all prescribed protocols in this document, and as long as there are no new cases reported between meeting times.
  - Leave room for visitors!
  - Cleaning and disinfecting of space after each meeting
- ❖ Wear masks and practice social distancing protocols (household groups may sit together, but otherwise, 6ft apart; will need to make physical markers—tape, signs—to designate 6ft distancing)
- ❖ Choral and congregational singing prohibited at this time due to spread of particulates.
- ❖ Maintain virtual worship, education & fellowship simultaneously for those not able to attend
- ❖ If paper bulletins/printed materials are used:

- They need to be available for people to access and not handed from one person to the next
- They cannot be reused for multiple services; parishioners should either have access to a recycle bin or take them home
- Electronic bulletins/materials are preferred
- ❖ Hand sanitizer and masks must be available at entry doors; masks are required for entry
- ❖ Greeters/leaders should not hand out materials, shake hands or hug individuals as they arrive or depart
- ❖ A greeter or usher should be designated to take the name of each attendee including the contact information for a new visitor and keep such a list for the purpose of contact tracing should there be exposure
  - An alternative may be to have an “attendance” list based on the directory that an usher/greeter would check off when people arrive.
  - Visitor information would still need to be collected.
  - Pre-registration may be preferred: <https://reopen.church/>
- ❖ Other expressions of exchanging the Peace that don't require physical contact (peace signs with fingers, waves, nods)
- ❖ Offering plates should be available at entry doors; plates are not to be passed from hand to hand
  - Online giving or direct deposit is recommended
- ❖ Plan for dismissing congregants in an orderly way that ensures social distancing
- ❖ In person pastoral visits resume with social distancing and masks/gloves
- ❖ Keep windows and doors open to allow air flow; worship outside may be preferable
- ❖ No coffee or snacks
- ❖ Stay in communication with the Bishop's Office
- ❖ Be prepared to roll-back if needed

### EDSJ Indoor Worship Protocols, Phase 2:

(Being the New Church, 25% of occupancy and/or up to 100 people)

- ❖ Successful navigation of requirements of Phase 1
- ❖ Establish and maintain safe practices for in-person Eucharist
  - Priests distributing the sacrament must wear a mask and use hand sanitizer prior to distribution
  - Only the host (commercially made, no homemade bread) is distributed
    - It is strongly recommended that priests use tongs to remove hosts from ciborium and then place it in the parishioner's hands
  - Congregation members will need to remain standing and will need to socially distance (6ft) as they approach one by one to receive the host by the priest
  - Deacons or assisting priests setting the table will need to use hand sanitizer prior to touching the vessels and bread
  - Only the celebrating priest stands at the altar during the Eucharistic prayer in order to practice social distancing
- ❖ Choral and congregational singing still not allowed
- ❖ Maintain virtual worship, education & fellowship simultaneously for those not able to attend
- ❖ If paper bulletins/printed materials are used:
  - They need to be available for people to access and not handed from one person to the next
  - They cannot be reused for multiple services; parishioners should either have access to a recycle bin or take them home
  - Electronic bulletins/materials are preferred
- ❖ Hand sanitizer and masks must be available at entry doors; masks are required for entry

- ❖ Greeters/leaders should not hand out materials, shake hands or hug individuals as they arrive or depart
- ❖ A greeter or usher should be designated to take the name of each attendee including the contact information for a new visitor and keep such a list for the purpose of contact tracing should there be exposure
  - An alternative may be to have an “attendance” list based on the directory that an usher/greeter would check off when people arrive.
  - Visitor information would still need to be collected.
  - Pre-registration may be required (<https://reopen.church/>)
- ❖ Other expressions of exchanging the Peace that don’t require physical contact (peace signs with fingers, waves, nods)
- ❖ Offering plates should be available at entry doors; plates are not to be passed from hand to hand
  - Online giving or direct deposit is recommended
- ❖ Dismiss the congregation in an orderly way that ensures social distancing
- ❖ Keep doors and windows open to allow for airflow; worship outside may be preferable
- ❖ Continue in-person pastoral visitations following social distancing protocols and wearing masks/gloves
- ❖ No coffee hour or snacks
- ❖ Resume weddings, baptisms/confirmations, funerals (masks, social distancing, hand hygiene)
- ❖ Resume outreach ministries in a safe manner (masks, social distancing, hand hygiene)
- ❖ Be prepared to roll-back if needed

IF/WHEN a vaccine and treatments are accessible and available:

- ✚ lifting of social distancing protocols
- ✚ masks no longer mandatory for worshippers or clergy
- ✚ choirs and congregational singing allowed
- ✚ offering plates can be passed among congregation members
- ✚ the Peace may be exchanged by hug or handshake
- ✚ bulletins, books and printed materials allowed
- ✚ Eucharist in both species (bread and wine)
- ✚ Coffee hour may resume

Children/Youth Ministry considerations:

- ✓ Consider delaying until Phase 2 has become consistently the “norm”
- ✓ Preregister children to limit how many are in any room at a time
- ✓ Limit leaders in children/youth areas to those with no preexisting conditions and those under 60 years old
- ✓ Have a cleaning checklist

Desired outcomes/learnings:

- ✚ Build in platforms for livestreaming and uploading worship services across the diocese
- ✚ Create platforms for gathering online (meetings, worship, fellowship)
- ✚ Allow for online real-time accessibility of meetings/gatherings
- ✚ Evaluate the need for printed materials
- ✚ Evaluate the need for in-person meetings vs virtual meetings
- ✚ Be more agile, flexible and adaptable
- ✚ Better sense of interdependence and interconnectedness

### Daily Non-Clinic Preventative Screening Form

Before returning to the workplace (employees, clergy, volunteers), attending meetings in person or attending in person worship, ALL individuals must self-assess symptoms daily. If you have ANY new onset of Major Symptoms or at least TWO Other Symptoms related to COVID-19 or are ill, please stay home and take care of yourself.

Clergy experiencing ANY new onset of Major Symptoms or at least TWO Other Symptoms, please be in touch with the Bishop's Office.

If you are experiencing any severe symptoms, consult your medical provider.

1. Are you experiencing a new onset of any of these COVID-19 related Major Symptoms?
  - Cough
  - Fever above 100.4
  - Shortness of breath
  - Unusual or abnormal fatigue
2. Are you experiencing a new onset of TWO OR MORE of these COVID-19 related Other Symptoms?
  - Headache
  - Muscle pain
  - Sore throat
  - New loss of taste or smell
  - Repeated shaking with chills
3. Are you feeling ill today?

If you answered YES to any of the above questions, you may NOT attend in person worship, meetings, or come to the workplace (clergy/employees/volunteers).

If you are an employee or volunteer at your local congregation, please be in touch with the clergy and/or Senior Warden to notify them that you are ill and/or working remotely.

### Sample Pre-registration/Covenant Form

1. Name of parishioner and total number of family/household members wanting to attend (ex., Peter Ackerman, 3)
2. Contact information (email & phone in case service is cancelled due to weather or roll-back)
3. We strongly urge you and your household to get a flu shot prior to attending worship in person.
4. Complete the following self-examination:
  - a. Have you or any member of your household tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 14 days?
  - b. Have you or any member of your household been exposed to anyone with a positive COVID-19 test in the last 14 days?
  - c. Do you or any member of your household have a fever?

\*\*\*answering YES to any of the above questions = stay at home

5. Have the parishioner initial next to the following or sign at the bottom attesting they agree to:
  - a. Wear a mask at all times while on campus
  - b. Practice social distancing while on campus
  - c. Refrain from hugs/handshakes while on campus

- d. Depart immediately following the service
- e. Bring their own chair or blanket for seating (outdoor worship only)
- f. Understand that should they fail to follow these guidelines, they will be asked to make amendments/adjustments or depart the worship service

Preparing for Indoor Worship

This form should be sent to Rev. Angela at [dioadmin@diosanjoaquin.org](mailto:dioadmin@diosanjoaquin.org)

Please note: If mailed, this could delay your start date due to mail delivery and receiving times. Please email.

Congregation: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_

Anticipated start date for in-person worship (the earliest acceptable date is **November 8, 2020**):  
\_\_\_\_\_

We have done a professional cleaning prior to re-entering the building

We have had our HVAC system inspected to ensure that filters and ducts are clean

We have removed all books, pew cards, writing utensils and other materials from the pews/chairs

We have designated a “cleaning team” and they have been trained to clean the worship space between and at the end of services.

We have met with user groups that share our campus to review protocols and guidelines regarding cleaning, social distancing and the use of masks

We have met with clergy and other altar party members to understand seating and movements at the altar to allow for social distancing

We have met with Vestry/BC/Chapter to review protocols and guidelines

We have met with ushers/greeters to review protocols and guidelines and empowered ushers/greeters to politely, but firmly enforce protocols

We have met with staff/volunteers to review protocols and guidelines

We have developed appropriate signage for entryways and high traffic areas explaining social distancing and the wearing of masks is required

We have developed appropriate signage for entryways and high traffic areas with local health department information

We have determined how restrooms will be used in terms of social distancing

We have masks and hand sanitizer available for parishioners and visitors to use

We have communicated through newsletters/phone calls/social media the requirement for wearing a mask and social distancing, as well as symptom self-checks and to remain at home if you are sick.

We have developed a plan for contact tracing (sign in sheet, greeter/usher using directory for “attendance”, pre-registration) so that should someone become ill, the Health Department can assist with notifying the congregation

We have markings in our worship spaces to indicate social distancing

Preparing for Outdoor Worship

This form should be sent to Rev. Angela at [dioadmin@diosanjoaquin.org](mailto:dioadmin@diosanjoaquin.org)

Please note: If mailed, this could delay your start date due to mail delivery and receiving times. Please email.

Congregation: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_

Anticipated start date for in-person worship (the earliest acceptable date is **November 8, 2020**):  
\_\_\_\_\_

- We have, using appropriate tape or chalk, marked areas outdoors where people may be seated, accounting for social distancing of a minimum of six (6) feet.
- We have determined what audio/visual equipment may be needed and made accommodations
- We will prepare a bulletin which can be downloaded electronically by parishioners in advance. If paper is used, it will not be shared between gatherings, but rather recycled after each gathering.
- We have masks and hand sanitizer available in various locations for parishioners
- We have prepared signs for requiring masks, bathrooms (and buildings) remain closed, programs such as bible study/adult education/Sunday school remain online only
- We have communicated with congregation about protocols, expectations and pre-registration
- We will begin experimenting with outdoor worship by following the Morning Prayer or Liturgy of the Word for 30 days
- We have met with clergy and other altar party members to understand seating and movements at the altar to allow for social distancing
- We have met with Vestry/BC/Chapter to review protocols and guidelines
- We have met with ushers/greeters to review protocols and guidelines and empowered ushers/greeters to politely, but firmly enforce protocols
- We have met with staff/volunteers to review protocols and guidelines
- We have developed appropriate signage for entryways and high traffic areas with local health department information
- We have developed a plan for contact tracing (sign in sheet, greeter/usher using directory for "attendance", pre-registration) so that should someone become ill, the Health Department can assist with notifying the congregation