



SAINT ATHANASIUS THE GREAT

GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

4 Appleton Street, Arlington, MA 02476

COVID-19 PARISH REOPENING GUIDELINES

Dear brothers and sisters in the household of God,

Xronia Polla!

With the blessings of Metropolitan Methodios, and abiding by all State and local governmental directives regarding the reopening of Churches and all Houses of Worship, your clergy and Parish Council have been diligently planning for the day our parish will once again be open to our stewards, families, and friends. That day will be Sunday, 5/24/20. In these challenging times, there will be certain directives that must be implemented and followed to assure the safest possible environment for the faithful to worship, partake of the Holy Sacraments and reconnect with fellow parishioners from a safe distance.

Christ's Church and this Parish have existed through persecution, plagues, infectious diseases, world wars, terrorist attacks, and other periods of challenge and concern. The Church and this community stand as a symbol of faith. The Church is the place where we come together as a community to pray, receive the sacraments and be in fellowship with one another. However, in this time, and because of the unpredictable nature of this insidious virus, there are directives, rules, and limitations, which we must accept in order to re-open and resume our liturgical practices in the safest possible way. These are rules—not suggestions—that we must enforce. We ask that each person understand and follow the directives listed below.

Preparations:

- According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), any building unoccupied for 7 days or longer need only receive “normal routine cleaning.” Based on these guidelines, the Church will be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected prior to reopening. From this baseline, the building will be disinfected and sanitized between each service, including high traffic, high touch areas like bathrooms, doorknobs, and handles, etc.
- The congregation size for any service will be limited to the current regulations of the state and local authorities, and pre-marked seating must abide by the social distancing regulations of 6 feet in all directions. Massachusetts allows 40% of our official capacity, which would be 320 persons maximum.
- If you are 65 years of age or older and if you have underlying health conditions, especially asthma, diabetes, hypertension, undergoing chemotherapy, ***or any age with known underlying conditions***, you should stay home and continue to participate in the services via our Live Stream.

- If you are 65 years of age or older *without* known underlying health issues, we recommend that you consider staying home, participating in the services via our Live Stream.
- If you have any respiratory symptoms, fever or malaise at all, whether attributed to COVID-19 or not, *you must stay home*.

Advice from our Medical Team Advisors:

- A recommendation from our Medical Team Advisors is for parishes to consider if possible, to have a “Greeter” take the temperature of those entering with an infrared thermometer pointed to the forehead. If a person’s temperature is higher than 100.4 F, he/she will be asked not to enter the Church.
- Parishioners who have a temperature greater than 100.4 F should stay home.
- If you or anyone in your household have been exposed to anyone with a confirmed COVID test you should not attend for at least 14 days.

Arriving at Church:

- **If you are attending services at the Church, you must wear a protective mask at all times except for the moment when you may be receiving Holy Communion.**
- If you are under medical instruction not to wear a mask, you must clearly indicate this to the “Greeter” upon entering.
- If you are attending services with a child/children between the ages of two and five, a protective mask is at the discretion of the parent. Children under the age of 2 should not wear a protective mask.
- Only the main entrance, lower side entrance, and handicap accessible entrance of the Church will be open. All other entrances will be locked.
- The doors that are designated for entrance/exiting the church should be propped open so there is no need to touch the door handles, and to provide better airflow into the Sanctuary.
- The Social Hall will be closed and off limits for the foreseeable future. Restrooms will be available.
- When arriving to Church, you should venerate the icons by bowing, but you should not kiss any icon.
- The Pangari/Narthex will be staffed by one Parish Council member to assist you, as much as possible, without contact. If you wish to purchase devotional candles, it will be placed at the iconostasis by a Parish Council member.
- A Parish Council member will guide arriving parishioners to the Pangari/Narthex to ensure appropriate distancing between arriving parishioners. Household family unit members may approach the Pangari together.
- Please bring appropriate change for donations as cash cannot be exchanged.

Seating in the Church:

- Seating inside the Church will be restricted to a 6 feet distance between parishioners (again defined as an “immediate household unit”) to the left and right and front and back. It is imperative that we maintain distancing at all times. Ushers will be present to seat you at an appropriate distance from other parishioners inside the Church.
- Family members who are not part of the same household must sit 6 feet apart without exception.
- There will be markers throughout the Church to help assure appropriate distancing.

Receiving Holy Communion:

- The priest will administer Holy Communion in our traditional manner.
- The line should form for Holy Communion in the aisle with proper social distancing measures in place. Following Holy Communion, the faithful will return to the pews by the proper one-way aisles only.
- The faithful should be encouraged/instructed to tilt their heads back and open their mouth widely so that the priest can drop the Holy Communion in without the person closing his/her mouth on the spoon.
- The faithful should not wipe their lips/mouth on the communion cloth.
- The antidoron will be available to you in individual bags.

Exiting the Church:

- At the conclusion of the Liturgy you will exit as directed by the “Ushers” to receive antidoron row by row, standing at a distance. The antidoron will be available to you in individual bags.
- The final hands-free collection offering will be set up in the front left and right sides of the church as you are about to exit. Please be ready to make your offering into the collection basket.
- There will be no fellowship hour following services.

The foregoing rules for attending Liturgy and other services at our Church were taken from State directives, local guidelines, and the direction and guidance of His Eminence Metropolitan Methodios. Our collective intent is to assure all our Stewards, their families and our many friends, a safe and comforting experience in the Household of God. We want to see you, we want to pray with you, but above all, we want you all to be safe, healthy and able to worship in a manner that is best for our entire Parish.

May God continue to bless you and your families and keep you safe!

Fr. Anthony Evangelatos
Parish Priest

Constandinos Ioakimidis
Parish Council President