



A Message About Re-opening St. Nicholas for Services

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

INTRODUCTION. Though clearly, the church was never closed, beginning with Matins and Liturgy on Saturday, June 6, Saturday of the Souls, we will be able to host more parishioners at our services. In doing so, we will be following the guidelines of our Metropolia and the directives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to provide a safe and welcoming environment for those attending services.

These guidelines are offered with Christian Love for the safety and wellbeing of all. As brothers and sisters in Christ, we should come together, with faith and love, having in our hearts and minds the desire to act responsibly towards one another, and keep each other safe and well. We hope all will follow these guidelines willingly and lovingly, out of obedience to those in authority and out of love for our neighbor.

We understand that some of you have been anxiously waiting to return to church, while others may not be comfortable doing so. We will continue to live stream our services to allow as many of us as is possible to continue to “attend” liturgy, both in person and remotely. For those coming to attend services it will not be “*church as usual*.”

LIMITED OCCUPANCY. To help facilitate an orderly approach to returning, while keeping within the safe standards of social distancing within the church, we should be able to have approximately 30 people at each service, in addition to Fr. Nick, our chantors, Tim and George and the altar servers. This is a starting point and we will evaluate as we go through this initial opening with the hope of being able to safely accommodate more parishioners in keeping with the state guidelines.

ENTERING THE CHURCH, LIGHTING CANDLES, DONATIONS, AND ICON VENERATION. Entry to (and exiting from) the church will be through the front entrance only off the walkway from the parking lot. Admittance to the service will be first come, first served. If you arrive at church after we have met the occupancy limit of approximately thirty (30) you will be invited to light a candle and venerate the icons.

We will require that you wear a mask or face covering when you come to church. Your mask or face covering should remain in place throughout the service. As you enter the church, an usher will greet you at the front door which, weather permitting, will be left open. We will have a limited supply of disposable masks at the church if needed.

You are invited to venerate the icons but we ask that you not kiss the icons. If you would like to light a candle(s) an usher will hand you the candle(s). There will be a basket for placing your offering for the candle and for the church in the narthex. We will not circulate a collection basket in church.

Before being seated, all parishioners will be asked to please use the hand sanitizer or wash their hands in the restrooms. You may do this again as you leave the church at the end of services.

FOLLOW THE DIRECTIONS OF THE USHERS. We ask that you follow the directions of the ushers. An usher will direct you to your seat in the church with members of the same household seated together, filling every other pew, starting from the front near the iconostasis and continuing progressively towards the back of the church.

The ushers will try to direct movement in and out of the church in a one-way traffic pattern. As mentioned above, we will continue live streaming the services. We ask that those attending be mindful of this and limit their movements in and out of the church during services to keep background noise to a minimum.

RECEIVING HOLY COMMUNION. If you are coming forward to receive Holy Communion you will take your mask off as you approach the chalice and put it back on after you have received antidoron. Each group or individual, as appropriate, will be directed to come forward to receive Holy Communion one at a time, rather than standing in line as is our usual practice.

DISMISSAL. Following dismissal by Fr. Nick and announcements, the ushers will follow the same practice as with Holy Communion, directing each group or individual to approach to receive antidoron from Fr. Nick and then proceed to exit the building. For the foreseeable future we will not be hosting coffee hour or memorial gatherings at the church following services. Please continue to practice safe distancing (at least 6') and wear your mask or face covering as you leave the church and head out to the parking lot area to get into your vehicles for the drive home.

GENERAL REMINDERS. As a reminder we will not be hosting Sunday School classes for the foreseeable future. Children must stay with their family members. If you find that you need to step out of services for a moment with your child, please go outside to the walkway area and then reenter the church. The classroom areas, kitchen, office and utility rooms will be closed and off limits to parishioners. We ask that you use the restrooms near the candle stand only, unless you need to use the handicap accessible bathroom. Again, entry and exit should be through the front entrance only.

FEDERAL AND STATE HEALTH GUIDANCE. State guidelines recommend that individuals over the age of 65, and those with underlying health conditions that may compromise their immune response, continue to avoid large indoor gatherings, including attendance in church. We understand the reason for this recommendation, although it is an individual's decision as to whether to attend.

If you, or anyone in your household is ill, or is experiencing symptoms of respiratory illness such as fever, headache, body aches, chills, or any other symptoms associated with the COVID 19 virus, PLEASE DO NOT come to the church until all are healthy.

If you, or anyone in your household is being tested for potential exposure to COVID 19, or has been in contact with a person with an active COVID 19 case, PLEASE DO NOT come to the church until all are confirmed to be free of the virus.

We have also implemented additional surface cleaning of high touch areas in the church and will regularly disinfect those areas before and after services.

Yours in Christ,
St. Nicholas Parish Council