

New Phase 3 Guidance

Earlier this week, Washington state entered Phase 3 of the Recovery Plan. Yesterday, Gov. Inslee released his official updated guidance for religious and faith-based organizations. You can read the [full document here](#).

This update allows:

- Up to 50% of room (or building) capacity, with a recommended maximum of 400 people if the space is less than 100,000 square feet and 600 people if the space is more than 100,000 square feet, so long as 6 feet of physical distancing can be achieved between each group in all directions.
- Choirs of any size to sing, so long as 6 feet of physical distancing is maintained between each singer and all singers wear a three-layer cloth mask or surgical mask.

Weddings and funerals must follow [this specific guidance](#), which upholds the guidance in Phase 2.

Based on the governor's guidance, in the Archdiocese of Seattle, we recommend the following:

- While we strongly encourage parishes to continue enforcing the 6 feet of distancing, parishes may follow the governor's guidance and allow up to 15 individuals to self-select to sit together. Please note, this will create the potential for "close contact," which is defined as 15 minutes within 6 feet of an infected person and thus requires contact tracing and quarantine measures for those individuals. Therefore, other control and mitigation measures are crucial for us to keep our parishioners safe. Please emphasize with your staff and parishioners:
 - pre-screening, including temperature taking and staying home if you are sick
 - mask wearing
 - ventilation of fresh air into the worship space
 - limiting time together in the same space and within 6 feet, especially face to face
- While the governor recommends keeping a log of attendees for contact tracing, we do not recommend that parishes use a registration system unless it is absolutely necessary for crowd control (see below). If exposure occurs, we ask that you continue to follow the current protocol of notifying the county public health department, notifying the archdiocese, and sending a HIPAA-compliant general message to the parish to inform them of a possible exposure.
- While the governor's guidelines permit "brief physical contact among a limited number of people (up to 15 individuals)," in the Archdiocese of Seattle, this pertains to interactions between altar servers and the celebrant. This does not allow for the "Kiss of Peace" or holding hands during the "Our Father."
- While choirs are allowed, congregational singing is not permitted. Chanting and a cappella responses may be permitted, but given the increase in capacity and proximity of non-household individuals, this is not the time to risk increased airborne viral load through singing.

Please remind everyone that the goal of getting more people to Mass is to allow for more people to encounter Jesus in the Eucharist. We must continue to make sacrifices for the sake of one another, and try not to let our desire for social interactions or other elements of the Mass we miss cause us to let our guard down or distract us from the real purpose of Mass.

How to Update Your Capacity

With the new guidance, we are removing the requirement to seat people in every other row. Instead, we encourage parishes to be creative in safely seating people 6 feet apart. This may include a system of spacing

diagonally or adding folding chairs to unused areas of the church, or creating designated overflow areas with a video screen so more parishioners can participate in Mass.

Based on the new guidance, we recommend each parish determine their total capacity at 50% and then determine the new capacity number with 6 feet of distancing. Once this is determined, look for creative ways to safely reach this new 50% capacity number.

Finally, rather than trying to police groups who want to sit together, encourage ushers to focus on helping individuals or families who prefer the 6 feet spacing to locate and maintain that throughout Mass.

Please update your reopening plan with your new capacity number and any other changes you'd like to make for Phase 3 and send it into SeattleMass2020@seattlearch.org.

Registration

Please note that registration is not required. We believe the registration system is an obstacle for people who would join in-person Mass otherwise. If your parish regularly hits its occupancy levels, then please continue to use the system to help with crowd control. However, if your parish has less than 80% occupancy on a regular basis, we recommend that you remove the registration system and prepare for potential overflow.

Handouts, Bulletins, and Worship Aids

Please continue the practice that once a person is handed an item, they take the item home. Some parishes have provided "personal" copies of worship aids that can be taken to and from the parish.

Updated Homebound Guidance

Given the new provisions for those who have been vaccinated, the homebound guidance has been updated. Please review the latest guidance and sample visit script [here](#).

Clarification for Schools

Some of you heard that the CDC is allowing schools to reduce social distancing to 3 feet. Please note this is a special exception to the rule and is only relevant in the classroom for the placement of desks. In all other situations, students and staff will maintain 6 feet of distancing. This rule has not yet been approved for the state of Washington.

Travel Guidance

With spring break coming up, we have had several questions about travel and quarantining. We recommend that everyone follow the [current CDC travel guidelines](#).

The CDC recommends that any traveler get tested three to five days after a trip and stay home in self-quarantine for a full seven days after travel, even if the test is negative. If a traveler is not tested, the individual should stay home and self-quarantine for 10 days after travel.

Please note that the new travel guidelines require all people, including U.S. citizens, to test negative before they can return to the country.