

# ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF THE ANNUNCIATION

360 Van Zile Road  
Brick, New Jersey 08724



Very Rev. Gary Joseph Breton, Rector

May 28, 2021

Christ is risen! Indeed He is risen!

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Archbishop Michael has released new guidelines to give Diocesan parishes direction as they adapt to the recent changes in civil restrictions with regard to Covid-19. Archbishop Michael's document is attached to this, our parish adaptation of the guidelines. **These guidelines are effective immediately.**

In our parish document, we will address different areas of parish life to which these guidelines directly or indirectly apply. And, we will indicate the way that we, as the parish priest and as members of the parish council, feel that we should go forward. Every detail may not be touched upon, but we will try to address everything that is most important.

1. **Masking.** People are now allowed to come into the Church unmasked. The guidelines state that all those who are fully vaccinated are free to do so. They also say that anyone who wishes to continue to wear a mask for any reason is free to do so. Those who should still strongly consider wearing a mask are those who are in vulnerable categories (65+, medical conditions that increase susceptibility to Covid-19, and unvaccinated persons). Our parish will follow this masking protocol. No person in the parish will be questioned regarding their vaccination status. All persons, however, should consider the good and welfare of the entire parish family when they decide whether or not to wear a mask.
2. **Social Distancing.** The 6-foot distancing mandate has been lifted. Essentially, we are now free to assemble as we did prior to the pandemic. However, there may be some parishioners who are uncomfortable with being in Church less than 6 feet apart. We will work with those parishioners and determine a seating arrangement that best accommodates them and everyone else in the parish. This could take several weeks of trial and error. Your patience is greatly appreciated.
3. **Sunday Groups.** We will no longer separate the parish into groups for Sunday Divine Liturgy. Beginning this Sunday, May 30, we will suspend the assignment of groups to a particular Sunday, and invite any and all people who wish to participate in the Divine Liturgy.
4. **Communion.** We will immediately return to the traditional manner of distributing Communion. The single spoon will no longer be sanitized between each communicant.

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Communicants may choose to continue to use a tissue for wiping their lips, or they may have them wiped by a person holding the communion cloth. A receptacle will remain close to the chalice for the disposal of tissues.

5. **Great Vespers on Saturday and Eves of Holy Days.** As of now, the sign-up sheet system that has been in use is no longer in effect. Therefore, all who wish to attend Great Vespers are able and encouraged to do so.
6. **Veneration of Crosses and icons.** Icons in the Church may now be venerated in the customary manner. The Cross will again be offered for veneration at the end of the Divine Liturgy. As was the case before, those wearing lipstick should take special care in venerating these holy objects, wiping away any residue with a clean tissue if possible.
7. **The Choir.** All singers are now welcome to enter the choir loft for services without restriction. As always, singers should be familiar with the material and be prepared to sing prayerfully. Reader Matthew will have the right to dismiss singers from the choir loft if he determines that they are not prepared to sing.
8. **Coffee Hour.** Essentially, we will return to our traditional Coffee Hour set-up. No longer is the bagging of food items necessary. For those who wish to remain socially distanced, several tables will be set up that allow for better social distancing. The new system of setting up, cleaning up, and purchasing Coffee Hour necessities, is still being worked out.
9. **Confession.** In-person Confession will be done without social distancing and with the priest placing his epitrachelion (stole) directly on the head of the communicant during the Prayer of Absolution. Confession by telephone will remain as an option for those who cannot come to the Church.
10. **Livestreaming of services.** This practice will continue for those who are unable to attend Divine Services in person. The livestream feed will be shown on the television in the Parish Hall for the foreseeable future.
11. **Sanitizing of the Buildings.** As a matter of good practice, all areas in both the Church and the Parish Hall that receive direct contact with persons will be cleaned and sanitized appropriately between every service.

We pray that many, if not all, of our faithful will find agreement with the direction that we have decided to take. As the implementation of this plan goes forward, we will gladly entertain input from our parish family.

Yours in Christ,

Father Gary and  
The Parish Council

Attachment