

November 1, 2020

Dear Parishioners & Friends,

We pray that this update on our parish finds you well and in good health. This letter is to update you on the current state of our parish and the actions we have taken to address the current outbreak of COVID-19 (Coronavirus). These are times unlike any that many of us have ever experienced. As a parish we are facing an unprecedented public health crisis which has now been declared as a Pandemic by the World-Health Organization. Together we will overcome these challenging times with care, diligence and patience.

This link directs you to the Synod's directives in their entirety: <https://www.goarch.org/-/directives-covid-19>

The protocols described below are being undertaken to protect the health and wellbeing of all in our community, especially those who have underlying health conditions and anyone over 60 years old. It is important to note that simple steps like the ones listed below have been shown to reduce the overall risk of infection in communities. As faithful Greek Orthodox Christians we are ever so mindful of practicing kindness, faith and love towards others. This protocol below will allow us to act on our faith and remain mindful of preserving the quality of human life. Prior to attending services at Saint Athanasius the Great, please read and familiarize yourself with the following actions we are implementing at our Parish.

- 1) If you are feeling sick, you cannot attend services or visit the parish. Please worship at home via live stream. You can access the St. Athanasius Live Stream here: <http://saintathanasius.org/livestreaming>
- 2) **A mask is required at all times while in the church building. Mask should be worn while walking in the church as well as when you are seated in the pews.** If you have an underlying health condition that does not allow for you to wear a mask you are exempt from this directive. All children over the age of 2 are required to wear face coverings.
- 3) Hand sanitizing stations are provided in the Narthex and at all entrances. Upon entering the church building disinfect your hands before proceeding anywhere.
- 4) Please do not venerate Holy Icons, Gospels and Blessing Crosses, instead reverence them by making the sign of the cross and bowing.
- 5) The clergy will not offer their hand to be revered and will refrain from touching the faithful either through handshakes or an embrace.
- 6) Blessed bread after receiving communion will be distributed by one individual with the use of tongs while wearing gloves or individual pre-packaged portions. Please extend the palm of your hand so that the bread can be placed into it ensuring that the tongs do not have contact with your hand.
- 7) The Antidoron will be passed out by the clergy after they have sanitized their hands. Please do not kiss the clergy's hand when you receive your Antidoron. The use of tongs or individual pre-packaged portions may also be distributed. This will also apply in cases of flowers (Sunday of the Veneration of the Holy Cross, Palm Sunday, Holy Friday etc.)
- 8) The Holy Eucharist will be distributed as usual (see below & links above).
- 9) In concelebrations, the clerical, "Kiss of Peace" will be through bowing to one another.
- 10) After every service, all liturgical objects and surfaces will be thoroughly cleaned.
- 11) Individual greetings with each other are not permitted (kisses, handshakes, hugging)
- 12) A distance of 6 feet or more is required at all times unless you are a part of one family unit that lives in the same household.

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS: SECTOR SPECIFIC WORKPLACE STANDARDS FOR PLACES OF WORSHIP AND RELIGIOUS SERVICES TO ADDRESS COVID-19 - Updated as of September 8, 2020

- All Places of Worship shall communicate to members and workers that they should not attend services in person if any of the following are true:
- Member or worker is experiencing any symptoms such as fever (100.0 and above) or chills, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, fatigue, headache, muscle/body aches, runny nose/congestion, new loss of taste or smell, or nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
- Member or worker has had “close contact” with an individual diagnosed with COVID-19. “Close contact” means living in the same household as a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, caring for a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, being within 6 feet of a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 for 15 minutes or more, or coming in direct contact with secretions (e.g., sharing utensils, being coughed on) from a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, while that person was symptomatic
- Member or worker has been asked to self-isolate or quarantine by their doctor or a local public health official

Face Coverings

- All attendees and staff must wear face coverings or masks in accordance with COVID-19 Order No. 31 and the Department of Public Health’s Guidance while inside and while entering and exiting places of worship or otherwise participating in in-person services, except where a person is unable to wear a face covering or mask because of a medical or disabling condition
- A leader or celebrant engaged in conducting the service or making an address may remove his or her face covering while doing so, provided that he or she is able to maintain a distance of at least 6 feet from other persons present; installation of protective, plexi-glass or other transparent barriers is recommended for lecterns and other points of address
- For children between age 2 and 5, the wearing of a face covering or mask is at the discretion of the child’s parent or guardian. Children under the age of 2 should not wear a face covering or mask
- A person who declines to wear a face covering or mask because of a medical or disabling condition shall not be required to produce documentation verifying the condition
- Place of worship may refuse entry to a person who refuses to wear a face covering or mask for non-medical reasons

The following list reflects postponements, cancellations and/or restrictions based on local and state regulatory agencies. The two web links provided here provide us with the current governance regulations: [Houses of Worship](#) [Public Gatherings](#)

All protocols for Saint Athanasius the Great are effective immediately:

- Sunday Fellowship Coffee Hour is not permitted
- Little Halos events / meetings / trips cannot exceed 25 persons (total occupancy includes all present)
- All gatherings before and after services is not permitted
- All ministry meetings cannot exceed 25 persons (total occupancy includes all present)
- All Goya events / meetings / trips cannot exceed 25 persons (total occupancy includes all present)
- All youth Greek dancing classes cannot exceed 25 persons (total occupancy includes all present)
- Adult Greek dance group has been postponed until further notice.
- All hall rentals have been postponed until further notice.

We will continue to closely monitor the situation and re-evaluate all local and state regulatory agencies and update our community as things evolve. Our cleaning company continues to remain vigilant and diligent in their duties ensuring that cleaning is thorough, and that sanitization of high touch points are disinfected with the appropriate cleaning agents. Sanitization of all surfaces and high touch points remains in place until further notice.

Finally, we would also like to address overarching concerns of the faithful with regard to Holy Communion and prayer:

- **Holy Communion** – Most importantly, please note that nothing will be done differently regarding Holy Communion. It has always been the teaching of the Church that the body and blood of Christ can never transmit disease. This is a matter of faith. Remember that everything regarding Holy Communion is miraculous. The on-going miracle of ordinary bread and wine changing into the Lord's body and blood is beyond our understanding and reasoning.
- **Prayer** - In times of trial and struggle, in times of disease and conquest, in times of poverty and illness, in times of natural disasters, a Christian is called upon to pray for our Lord's strength. It is critical even in this day and time to cling unto God and call upon His Holy Name. Let us continue in service to Him and come together with fervent faith allowing nothing to separate us from the Assembly of the Church.

We thank you in advance for your cooperation in abiding by this protocol. It is our fervent prayer that we can return to "normal" soon. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to Fr. Bob Archon at FrArchon@saintathanasius.org

