



# ST. GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

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## ΑΓΙΟΣ ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΟΣ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ

### 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, June 7, 2020**. 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 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 liturgy, including high traffic, high touch areas like bathrooms, doorknobs, and handles, etc.
- In accordance with the mandated 40% occupancy guidelines by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the liturgy will be held to maximum of 100 attendees including staff and clergy. Individuals will be denied entrance to the church once that number is reached.
- 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 liturgy via our Live Stream on the St George Facebook page.
- If you are 65 years of age or older *without* known underlying health issues, we recommend that you consider staying home, participating in the liturgy via our Live Stream on the St George Facebook page.



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- If you have any respiratory symptoms, fever, or malaise at all, whether attributed to COVID-19 or not, *you must stay home*.
- We kindly ask that 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.
- Until further notice, we are asking parishioners to please call the church office in advance to inform the Parish Council that you plan to attend the liturgy and how many will be in your party. This will allow the Parish Council to maintain the occupancy guidelines set for by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

### *Arriving at Church:*

- **All attendees must arrive wearing face coverings or masks.** If a parishioner or staff member is unable to wear a face covering because of a medical or disabling condition, they may be excused at the discretion of Parish Council members and staff. A limited supply of face masks will be made available upon request. Children under the age of 6 are encouraged to wear face coverings but will remain at the discretion of the parent or guardian accompanying the child.
- Parishioners and staff will have access to handwashing facilities, including soap, running water and hand sanitizer in the main level bathrooms only. The downstairs bathrooms will not be accessible.
- The sole entrance into Saint George for all parishioners and staff during church liturgy will be through the Narthex on the front left side entrance of the church. This is the only entrance with an accessible ramp for those who may need assistance.
- The center aisle of the church is closed to all traffic. The side aisles will be the only means of egress and will be marked clearly as “one way” traffic with all traffic flowing in the direction of the Altar. Parish Council members will usher parishioners to their pews and maintain social distancing.
- The doors that are designated for entrance/exiting the church will be propped open so there is no need to touch the door handles, and to provide better airflow into the Sanctuary.
- 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 Parish Council members to assist you, as much as possible, without contact. If you wish to purchase [white] vigil candles, it will be placed at the solea by a Parish Council member.
- The St George Community Center will be closed and off limits for the foreseeable future.



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- Existing forms of “non-cash” donations will be available during the liturgy as well as during the week. Parishioners will be encouraged to donate to the church via electronic mediums (Venmo), credit cards or direct deposit prior to coming to church.
- Two cash donation trays will be available in the foyer of the church for those preferring cash donations. This will replace the donation trays normally passed out during the liturgy.
- The money received from candle sales and cash donations will be monitored/maintained by Parish Council members.

### *Seating in the Church:*

- Pews will be designated, according to state recommendations, to ensure 6-foot compliance. Every other row of pews will be made available for sitting with rope off rows not available clearly marked. Visual distancing markers (if necessary) will be placed in each pew to ensure compliance.
- Members of the parish council will escort parishioners to their seats to maintain proper standards. Signage indicating maximum number of persons per pew may be posted at each row.
- Families living within the same household will be allowed to sit together.

### *Receiving Holy Communion:*

- The priest will administer Holy Communion in our traditional manner.
- Holy Communion will be administered at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy. As you exit the Church those wishing to receive Holy Communion please proceed to the solea and line up with proper social distancing. Please follow the directives of the Parish Council.
- As you approach to receive Holy Communion you are instructed to lower your mask and tilt your heads back and open your mouth widely so that the priest can drop the Holy Communion in without closing your mouth on the spoon.
- Do not wipe your lips/mouth on the communion cloth.
- Please follow the rules below for exiting the Church.

### *Exiting the Church:*

- At the conclusion of the Liturgy you will exit as directed by the Parish Council row by row, standing at a distance.



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- Two exits will be the main sources of egress for all staff and parishioners after the liturgy. Parishioners seated in the left side pews of the church will exit out to the driveway side of the building to access the parking lot while those sitting on the right side of the church will exit onto Blossom Street side and access the parking lot via the sidewalk.
- Antidoron and koliva(memorial wheat) will be available (both individually wrapped) as you leave the Church. One each, per person.
- There will be no fellowship hour following the liturgy.

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!

Sincerely,

**Rev. Fr. George Tsoukalas**  
*Parish Priest*

**Arthur M. Argeros**  
*Parish Council President*