

Children and Youth Ministry Regathering Guidelines

Stage 1B

Episcopal Diocese of NC

8/13/20

These guidelines and recommendations have been prepared by a team of diocesan clergy, staff, and lay leaders. Our highest value is to protect the wellbeing of our children, students, faculty and their households. As we all realize, however, wellbeing, safety and risk are large concepts and definitions may vary from situation to situation.

Though a variety of perspectives and situations were part of this collaboration, we know there is no one size fits all when it comes to your discernment about when and how to reopen places of learning for children and teenagers. While setting some essential parameters, these guidelines and recommendations give you and your local community room to make some of your own determinations for your own location. If you wish to offer an alternative or customized plan that appears to differ in some significant way from these recommendations, we are more than happy to consult with you. In such a case, please direct your communications to Bishop Rodman. He and members of Diocesan staff will be more than happy to work with you and help navigate a mutually acceptable plan.

Recommendations for Stage 1B:

- Bible studies, coffee hours, social gatherings, meetings - including youth gatherings - and other small group activities take place via telephone, online or **in groups of 15 or fewer outside masked** participants maintaining 6 feet of physical distancing. It is not recommended to include activities that involve running or other exertion due to the increased risk of spreading COVID-19 droplets.
- It is not recommended that children gather in person at this stage. If a children's ministry leader wants to gather children in small groups, they should get written permission from the Bishop.
- It is recommended that virtual youth gatherings still be the principle way youth ministries meet.
- Nurseries are not allowed at this time.
- Communicate to young people, volunteers and parents any new applications/safety protocols prior to their return.
- In-home pastoral visits by clergy, staff and lay people with appropriate PPE may resume in Stage 1B. In-home visits must be preceded and followed by thorough handwashing (or use of hand sanitizer if necessary, followed by hand washing as soon as possible.)

These visits should be outside, each party wearing a mask, and remaining at a physical distance of at least 6 feet, and must be kept for no more than 10 minutes. All Safe Church guidelines should be followed.

- All pastoral visits assume that neither the visitor nor the clergy person has any symptoms of COVID-19.
- Pastoral care conversations via telephone and video call are also encouraged. All guidelines concerning confidentiality apply to these conversations as they would to in-person conversations.

Gathering Guidelines:

- People should sign in and, **only** if required by government and health authorities have their temperature taken.
- People should bring their own mask and wear it. Churches should have masks for children/youth to use if anyone forgets theirs.
- Children 2 years old and older and adults are to wear a mask in all public/shared spaces.
- Tie mask securely in place or loop elastic around ears to cover your **nose and mouth** with no gaps between your face and the fabric. If it does not stay or fit securely, do not use it; find one that fits properly instead.
- Do not touch your face or the outside of your mask until you are out of the church or building.
- Use stationary ground markers to indicate where people should sit.
- Everyone should bring their own chair, drinks, snacks, masks and any materials needed like pen/paper/markers.
- Parents will drop off and pick up with social distancing away from the group at a designated area.
- Singing is not allowed, as it causes a higher transmission rate of COVID-19.
- Cough/sneeze into the elbow (when wearing long sleeves) or into the shirt (when wearing short sleeves), or cover with tissue. **DO NOT** sneeze into the hand!
- Put necessary documentation in place: signage in the building; contact tracing measures, such as sign-in sheets; and update all necessary contact information for young people and volunteers.
- Have all needed supplies for cleaning/disinfecting surfaces and spaces. Have adequate PPE, sanitizer.

Screening:

- Because COVID-19 can occur in persons with no symptoms, mild symptoms and severe illness, screening with specific questions can help identify people at risk for

unrecognized infection. Symptoms may appear anywhere from 2-14 days after virus exposure. A negative test is no guarantee that a person is not infected, as false negative results vary with the brand and type of test used.

- Everyone attending should be logged with name, phone number and answers to screening questions below. Only one adult should handle the log sheet.
- A listing of those present should be kept in the event of any contact tracing.
- Members should self-select to stay home if they have any of the following symptoms to protect others:
 - cough
 - shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Members should self-select to stay home if they have any 2 of the following symptoms to protect others:
 - fatigue
 - muscle pain or body aches
 - headache/migraine
 - sore throat
 - new loss of taste or smell
 - congestion or runny nose
 - nausea or vomiting
 - diarrhea
- Children may have similar symptoms as adults but generally have milder illness and so they, too, should be screened with questions.
- Church communications about meetings and activities should make clear that persons answering YES to any of the following questions should NOT physically participate in an activity:
 - In the past 30 days, have you traveled internationally?
 - In the past 30 days, have you or anyone in your household had contact with persons with confirmed or suspected coronavirus exposure or COVID-19?
 - **In the past 30 days, have you or anyone in your household had contact with persons with COVID-19 symptoms?**

Bathrooms:

- Only 1 person is allowed in the restroom at a time.
- Masks must be worn in restrooms at all times.
- Please knock on the main restroom door and stand back to wait for at least 2 minutes.
- Wash hands for 20 seconds (post instructions on mirror) prior to touching the stall door.
- After using toilet, put toilet seat (where possible) down to flush, wash hands again, use a paper towel to dry hands and to turn off the water faucet.

- Use disinfecting wipe to wipe down the stall door handle, flush handle and any other surface you touched.
- If you must blow your nose, use a tissue, deposit into a trash can and wash hands as above.
- Use a paper towel to open the main restroom door to exit if not propped open.
- Use hand sanitizer after exiting the restroom.

Online Best Practices:

These are some best practices to put in place, particularly at this time of physical distancing, as we are having to use social media, texting and video conferencing to offer programs and to stay in touch with young people.

- Create a group covenant, group norms and ask all participants to adhere to the covenant and norms.
- Establish methods for handling inappropriate comments and communications.
- Get permission from parents/guardians before inviting minors into these types of communication methods.
- Include parents and guardians on communications and keep them informed of the ways in which the group is keeping in contact.
- Use the organization's official account to communicate. Do not use a personal account.
- All groups/chat rooms/video conferencing should be private. Do not share or repost any portion of these communications.
- Turn off the comment feature or set it so that any comments must be approved by the host.
- Always have at least two unrelated adults participating in these forms of communication.
- **Maintain the 'Rule of Three': Avoid one-to-one conferencing between adults and minors.** Make sure never to be alone in a chat room with a parishioner, particularly minors. Have your hosts (two unrelated, trained adults) log in a few minutes before the scheduled time. Have a plan if you find yourself on a video conference with one adult and one or multiple youth. For example, you can request that one of the young people ask a parent to join the call or discontinue the call and reschedule for a different time.
- Any inappropriate comments or behavior should be reported immediately to your direct supervisor. Don't post links to meetings on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or other public places online. Send them in emails or texts. Don't invite people you don't know into a private space with youth and children.
- For meeting with anyone (adults and/or minors): the host can mute, turn off video or remove participants from the call.

- We suggest, if possible, that whoever is spiritually leading the meeting is NOT set as the host, so they can focus on their ministry.
- Ask another trusted leader to be the host of the meeting to run a ministry of boundaries. This second person can manage the meeting: i.e., mute/unmute participants, turn on/off video, kick people out if needed.
- Laws regarding mandated reporting of suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation of children or youth apply in the virtual world as they do in the physical world.
- For Zoom meetings specifically, go into your [settings](#) and make the following changes.
- Require [registration](#) to secure a meeting. Registration can be customized. Requiring cell phone numbers is good practice.
- Turn off “Join before host” and enable the waiting room feature so participants wait until the host has started meeting.
- Turn off private chat.
- Auto-save all chat history.
- Turn off file transfer.
- Turn off screen sharing for participants.
- Turn off the whiteboard, or turn on auto-save if you’re using it for the lesson/game.
- Turn off “allow removed participant to rejoin.”
- Provide transparency by recording the entire meeting. Be sure to let every participant know that it is being recorded and for what purpose. If you are recording minors, you should get the permission of their guardians.
- Don't post screenshots of meetings online without permission of everyone in the photo. If possible, remove names from the photo before posting. Do not share screenshots of minors without permission from their guardian.
- Facebook [tutorial](#) on Zoom meetings by Sarah Stonesifer Boylan, VTS Digital Missioner.

Confirmations:

It is appropriate to delay confirmations until the community can be together. Regional confirmations will take place once we may gather, in consultation with the bishop’s office.

Stage Two:

Date to be Determined

PHI: Rates of cases, hospitalizations and deaths are declining. Testing and tracing are available. Sufficient PPE is available.

Small indoor church worship may restart in spaces large enough for 6 feet of physical distance to be maintained between people from different households. The total number of people present should not exceed 25, including the worship leadership team. Formation groups of 15 or fewer people might consider meeting in person while wearing masks and maintaining

physical distancing, or they may continue to gather online.

Stage Three:

Date to be Determined

PHI: Case, hospitalization and deaths are near zero. Widespread testing and tracing are available. Health care systems have the capacity to manage all in need.

Larger group ministries (youth groups, camps, classes) may resume within established guidelines.