

# **A JOURNEY BY STAGES STAGE II REGATHERING PLAN**

*Approved by the Diocese of Massachusetts on October 13, 2020  
Approved by the Vestry of Ascension Memorial Church on October 21, 2020*

## **ASCENSION MEMORIAL CHURCH A Parish of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts**

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# I. PREPARATION

## 1. Property and Casualty Insurance

- Ascension will rigorously follow all best practices, CDC guidelines, and State government regulations in order to reduce any potentiality of negligence resulting in liability.
- Ascension maintains full property and casualty insurance with The Church Insurance Company of Vermont, Policy No. VPP0010443.
- A recording of the church insurance zoom meeting with the Diocese and representatives of the Church Insurance Company on June 24, 2020 is on file for reference and has been reviewed by members of the committee.

## 2. Cleaning/Disinfecting Plan

- Strict adherence to cleaning/disinfecting and hygiene measures between each service, following CDC guidelines, with special attention to heavy transit areas and high-touch surfaces, e.g., doorknobs, restrooms, microphones, and shared instruments.
- The Church is purchasing electrostatic static sprayers as well as pump sprayers and will maintain at all times adequate supplies of disinfecting wipes, hand soap, hand sanitizer, and cleaning products.
- A combination of an electrostatic sprayer and pump spray/wipe will be used after events. If there is a Covid positive case in church then the electrostatic sprayer will be used exclusively to deep clean, as part of a strategy differentiating between everyday cleaning and a deep clean. (Electrostatic sprayers are considered more effective than pump sprayers for disinfecting as particles are drawn to the surface magnetically versus gravity for a much more complete coating.)
- Renters will have the responsibility by contract for cleaning the spaces they use. They will submit their cleaning plans for approval.
- AMC staff & volunteers will assist sexton when possible with daily cleaning of high-touch areas that staff encounter.
- If it is known that an individual with Covid-19 attended a service or otherwise entered church buildings, a deep cleaning and disinfecting shall be conducted consistent with CDC guidance.
- *Helpful link:* Waxie website: <https://info.waxie.com/>
- *Helpful link:* Building Re-entry 6 step plan: <https://youtu.be/jouvYKB3UTA>
- *Helpful link:* EPA "N List" of approved Covid disinfectants: <https://cfpub.epa.gov/giwiz/disinfectants/index.cfm>

## 3. Ventilation Plan

- The Church is proposing to purchase REME HALO<sup>®</sup> In-duct Air Purifiers using UV light technology as a way to improve air quality. Current Church HVAC systems do not introduce fresh air, only recycle air. Reconfiguration of HVAC systems would be too costly for the Parish, as would the purchase of multiple air purifiers. *(Because of these limitations it is the opinion of the Regathering Committee that in-person services should resume only after a vaccine and effective treatment is available.)*
- During warmer days all windows and doors open can be opened facilitate circulation of outside air. Note however, the stained glass windows of the church do not open.

- Renters will be made aware of the exact capabilities of our HVAC system and can decide the risk factors for their group.

#### 4. Church Office Workspace Safety Plan

- **Social Distancing:** All persons, including employees, customers, and vendors should remain at least six feet apart to the greatest extent possible, both inside and outside workplaces (excluding incidental passing of others).
- **Masks:** When not working in separate offices or different parts of the building, masks shall be worn. Mask will be provided if needed.
- **Hygiene:** Employees shall frequently wash hands. Adequate supplies to do so shall be available. Sexton staff shall provide regular sanitization of high touch areas, such as workstations, equipment, screens, doorknobs, restrooms throughout the building.
- **Staffing:** No employee showing Covid-19 like symptoms, or having had contact with a person showing these symptoms shall return to work until such time that they have observed a quarantine or are cleared by their physician to do so.
- **Attendance:** The Staff Office should be occupied by one staff member at a time. Scheduling work in the office in advance is recommended to comply.

#### 5. Restroom Use Plan

- Usage will be limited to one occupant at a time, with occupied/unoccupied signs on doors.
- Hand sanitizer and wipes will be available in all restrooms.
- Floors will be marked for social distancing of six feet for those waiting in line.
- A wish list will be maintained on website for specific items to be purchased as a restricted donation like no-touch towels, faucets, and soap dispensers.

#### 6. Outside Renters

- AMC currently has a few outside rental groups that regularly use the church: the AMC Nursery School, Narcotics Anonymous, and TTS youth camp in the summer. Before resuming any rentals, church staff and warden(s) will meet with renters and thoroughly go over all Covid safety procedures. Rental contracts will be updated to include all safety procedures and renters will be required to agree and sign. Renters agree to follow CDC protocols, state Covid safety requirements and Episcopal Church Stage 2 Guidelines.
- **Symptoms:** All persons who are experiencing symptoms of Covid-19 should not enter the building. Those who are in a high-risk category for contracting the disease are encouraged to not enter the building. No renter shall enter the building if showing symptoms of Covid-19 as described by the CDC. Renters agree to limit group to no more than 8 per 1000 sq. ft. in accordance with Governor's guidelines; renters agree no more than 25 persons in any one enclosed space.
- **Physical Distancing:** All persons must maintain 6 feet minimum physical distance at all times (excluding incidental passing of others).

- **Masks:** Masks will be worn at all times inside the church by all over the age of 5. Children between 2 and 5 may wear a mask at the parent's and teacher's discretion. Medical reasons are exempted, though the Renter should make persons claiming medical exemption aware of potential risk. The Renter is required to provide masks for anyone who comes to an event without a mask.
- **Occupancy Limits for Each Space:** The Maximum Occupancy for each space is limited to a certain number of units based on Ascension Memorial Church's Re-Gathering Team's Guidelines (informed by municipal and state guidelines). A "unit" is defined as 1-4 people within a non-socially distanced household. These Guidelines will be communicated to the Renter and are posted clearly in each the Sanctuary, the Chapel, the Parish Hall, the Boone Hall Gym, and the Staff Offices. Changes to those guidelines will be communicated in a timely manner. Emergency changes to maximum occupancy may be made at the discretion of AMC based on municipal, state, federal, and other guidelines.
- **Access:** Renters agree to enter and exit the building through gymnasium doors (lower level) to improve flow and minimize risk to staff working in the front hall. Nursery school teachers (and children) agree to enter lower level and proceed upstairs to the parlor, staying within their cordoned off corridor to their classroom. Exiting shall be done in the reverse exactly. Nursery school will not permit parents to enter the building during this time.
- **Contact Tracing:** the Renter is required to record the name and contact information of each person attending their event/renter space. The Renter is required to keep and maintain a record of this info for three month and to make such records available to AMC and public authorities immediately upon request. Renters agree to diligently keep track of all persons attending an event or nursery school, in order that contract tracing may be done subsequently if needed. Renters agree to notify immediately the staff of Ascension Memorial Church so that the Ipswich Board of Health may be notified and procedures for cleaning/disinfection and quarantining may take place.
- **Reporting:** If an attendee displays symptoms within two weeks of the event/renter space at AMC and notifies the Renter of testing positive for Covid-19, the Renter is required to notify the Parish Administrator at [amcipswich@verizon.net](mailto:amcipswich@verizon.net) or 978-356-2560 immediately, in addition to the other attendees.
- **Cleaning and Disinfecting:** Hand sanitizer and hand-washing stations (restrooms) are readily available and must be used often by renters. Sanitizing of hands by use of hand sanitizer and/or washing with antibacterial/antiviral soap for twenty seconds is recommended for all persons. The church will keep restrooms supplied with plenty of soap and paper towels for hand washing. Frequently touched surfaces (including door handles, restroom furnishings, pew rails, etc.) must be disinfected routinely, including before and after the Renter's scheduled time. Renters agree to clean and disinfect their space when an event/school is finished for the day, in accordance with the rental contract.
- **Restroom Use:** Renters agree to limit restroom use to one person/family group at a time.
- **Food & Drink:** Personal food and beverage must be consumed while seated.
- **Ventilation:** Use of fans in open windows blowing into the room or semi-permanent AC

units is recommended in all rooms in order to introduce fresh air and aid in ventilation. Doors and windows should be left open when using a space, if possible. Renters agree to keep windows open whenever possible, to introduce fresh air. In the winter the church will make use of HVAC modifications such as the whole sanctuary fan, air purifiers and fans to improve air quality.

## **7. Signage**

- Signage and floor markings will direct staff, renters, and attendees of services how to enter, move about and exit the Church, Parish House, and Boone Hall in ways that minimize risk and maintain social distancing.

## **8. Compliance Posters**

- All required compliance posters will be reviewed and prominently posted.
- Compliance attestation poster: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/compliance-attestation-poster-english/download>
- Employer guidance poster: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/employer-reopening-poster-english/download>
- Worker poster: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/worker-reopening-poster-english/download>

# **II. GATHERING**

## **1. Seating Plan**

- The nave of Ascension Memorial Church is 50 x 25 feet with a configuration of pews that, in order to attain social distancing of 6 feet, would allow two individuals in every other pew for a total of 32 individuals in the nave area.
- The transept is likewise 50 x 25 with seating available for 4 individuals on the North side where a small side chapel is located and 8 on the South side (4 on either side of the organ).
- The sanctuary is 25 x 25 with seating available for 6 individuals.
- Total capacity for the room such that individuals can maintain a safe distance of 6 feet apart is 40 persons.

## **2. Attendee Monitoring and Management Plan**

- AMC will strictly follow the State's Board of Health guidelines. Every person who attends a service or event at AMC will be required to pre-register, providing their name and phone and email address. In the event of a positive Covid-19 test from an attendee, every attendee will be notified in accordance with state contact tracing protocols.
- Prior to the Service/Event, we will ask every attendee to: 1) Call the parish office or email parish office with their intent to attend the service, 2) Provide their current phone and email contact information.
- All lists of registered attendees will be kept in a file for or one year for contact tracing purposes if needed.

- Last minute registrants or walk-ins will also be asked for this contact information in accordance with the guidelines. If they are not willing to share this information, they will not be admitted to the event.
- The following announcement shall be placed in our weekly bulletin:  
*"AMC follows all state public health requirements in terms of contact tracing. In the case of learning that someone here today tests positive for Covid-19 in the next several days, we will inform you so that you may take appropriate steps in consultation with your physician and Department of Health."*

### **3. Staff Training**

- Staff will be required to study carefully and become familiar with all aspects of the directives given by Diocesan in *A Journey By Stages* and any subsequent documents.
- The staff currently meets each week (Wednesday at 10:30), during which protocols and any issues pertaining to the safe running of the parish are discussed.

### **4. Liturgy Plan**

- Ascension plans to continue offering two online virtual Sunday morning services until a vaccine and effective treatment becomes available. This is the preference of our congregation based on a recent survey.
- In order to facilitate cleaning schedules, upon re-opening the 8:00AM service will be offered only online, while the 10:15AM will be open to pre-registered participants.
- The Rector and the Director of Music & Liturgy confer throughout the week on coordinating the Sunday liturgies. The Director of Music & Liturgy is responsible for scheduling all volunteer ministers such as lectors, Eucharistic ministers, acolytes, etc.
- The Directress of the Altar Guild and the Rector coordinate all aspects pertaining to Holy Communion and will follow closely all directives from the Diocese.
- A bulletin for each service is provided on the website. Currently plans are being discussed to switch from printed-paper leaflets to projected images when the church reopens for in-person worship.
- All hymnals, bibles, and prayers books are removed from pews.
- The Worship committee meets periodically to discuss and make decisions on various aspects of the liturgical life of the church. In addition to establishing the schedule of services for the year, the committee focuses on how to ensure the liturgies are welcoming and relevant to our parish and the wider community, and are carried out with dignity and forethought.

### **5. Music Plan**

- Ascension is currently featuring only piano and organ music in a live context, offered each week by the Director of Music & Liturgy.
- In addition to live keyboard offerings, selections from recordings of past concerts and services featuring the Choir of Ascension Memorial Church are used for offertory anthems and service music, as are selections from past performances of The Honors

Youth Choir of Chorus North Shore whose director, Sonja Pryor, is a parishioner and has given permission to use the recordings.

- The Church maintains an annual reprint and podcast/stream license with OneLicense (A-725499) with acknowledgements appearing after each music selection in the bulletin when required.
- There are no current plans to re-gather the Choir until more information from research on safe practices for singing becomes available. The Choir is not currently creating virtual performance files but plans to resume remote rehearsals using zoom in order to stay connected to its music ministry. The Director of Music & Liturgy follows closely the discussions among members of the various professional music organizations and the developments in ongoing studies.

## **6. Online Worship**

- The church currently live-streams its two Sunday morning services (8:00am and 10:15am) and the Wednesday afternoon service (5:30PM) through Facebook and the church website at <https://www.amcipswich.org/amc-online>
- A bulletin for the services is provided on the website.
- The church maintains an annual subscription with Vimeo in order that videos of the live-streamed services can be created and archived on the website each week.

## **III. SERVING**

### **1. Pastoral Care Plan**

- Our lay ministry group (an expansion of the existing Lend-a-Heart Ministry) organized specifically for serving our most vulnerable parishioners during the initial outbreak of the pandemic has now largely become dormant by design. If needed in the coming months, Lend-A-Heart may become active again through the leadership of parishioner and nurse manager, Kathy Pischke-Winn. Some phone calling continues by pastorally-minded parishioners, but NO in-person contact of any kind continues as a ministry of the parish.
- The Rector and few members of the Tiki's Friends Ministry visit with parishioners in hospitals and rehabilitation venues within the safety limits set by these institutions. However, the primary form of pastoral care is limited to emails, zoom conference calling, letter writing, and phone calling.
- Any future plans for pastoral care either by lay volunteers or by staff members will require all persons to observe safe-distancing, the wearing of masks, the washing of hands with an anti-bacterial disinfectant before and after all encounters, and encouragement of all to meet outdoors or in areas with proper ventilation.

### **2. Community Service Plans**

- We are assuming that Community Service is equal to our Outreach Ministries. Its activities are focused on the wider community outside of the parish.

- The current projects with which the Outreach Ministries has been involved include: Family Promise of the North Shore, B+SAFE, and Winter Warm Up Sale. These current projects/opportunities did not happen this year due to pandemic restrictions on the uses of our buildings and the fact that B+SAFE and Family Promise would not travel to Ipswich. We have supported these institutions financially by giving them the monies that we would have spent by hosting the groups in Ipswich. The Winter Warm Up Sale is not happening at the end of October because of the limitations faced by holding the event in Boone Hall, and the gathering, sorting, and selling of used clothing.
- There are other projects at which the individual members of the parish have volunteered. Ones known to the members of the committee are: Family Promise (Dawn Edwards), Ipswich Caring (Betsy Johnson), Cradles to Crayons pajama project (Kitty Bartholomew), and Three Sisters COOP (Jane Roundy).
- We do not believe that we can or should draw up a regathering plan for these groups in the future until we have clearer direction on what protocols will be in place due to the pandemic.
- We are considering making financial donations from the Outreach budget to local charities only. These might (but not necessarily) include Birth to Three, Ipswich Caring, and the Ipswich Food Pantry, which is run by Open Door Pantry in Gloucester.
- We do not know if we should encourage church members to individually volunteer in the community at this time or not given peoples' comfort level interacting with others in the community.
- The Outreach Ministries has not met as a group since last February (2020). Most of our limited actions have been done by telephone or e-mail. Given the average age of the group is over 75 years old, we are not sure on how to move forward with meetings that would be safe for all those involved.

### **3. Board of Health Notification Plan**

- If the Parish receives any report of positive Covid-19 diagnosis of an attendee, the Ipswich Board of Health will be promptly contacted at 978 356-6606. All directions for contact tracing from the Board of Health will be followed.
- Because we are wearing masks and social distancing, merely being in the church at the same time as the person who tested positive makes "close contact" less likely. However, in an abundance of caution, the church will take the following steps: 1) Make an email or phone call to everyone signed up for that service or event, letting them know that an exposure to Covid-19 may have occurred, and encouraging them to check in with their own physician; 2) Prior to reopening the church building to the public, conduct a thorough and deep cleaning and disinfection in accordance with CDC guidelines.

## **IV. GROWING**

### **1. Online Giving Plan**

- In July of this year, Ascension launched a newly designed website [www.amcipswich.org](http://www.amcipswich.org) intended to provide better communications for its members and reach to the general public.



- Currently the church is in the process of adopting Realm that provides state of the art capabilities for online giving and parish communications. It will be ready for the 2021 pledge campaign beginning in late October - early November.

## **2. Small Group Gathering Plan**

- Group in-person attendance limited to 6
- Coordinator to contact participants to check if they are comfortable meeting in person and do not have any illness symptoms
- On-line registration or group coordinator maintains attendance record with contact details
- Coordinator, or designated person, to set up room layout and break down afterwards
- Chairs to be minimum of 6' apart
- Folding chairs used, wiped down before and after the meeting
- All participants provide their own mask, gloves and hand washing sanitizer
- Extra supplies of PPE available: Masks, gloves, hand sanitizer
- Masks to be worn throughout the meeting
- Hand sanitizer also provided at meeting
- Participants provide own beverage and supplies as needed
- Disposal of any trash in appropriate containers
- Group meetings in specified location only, such as St. Matthew's Parlor or Boone Hall

## **3. Child Care**

- There is currently no child care offered at AMC, as we provide online services only. Upon regathering, child care will be provided during the 10:15am service upon prior request. All proper hygiene protocols will be strictly maintained. For children between ages two and five, the wearing of a face covering or mask is at the discretion of the child's parent or guardian; children under the age of two will not wear a face covering or mask.

## **4. Online Formation Program**

- All religious educational formation currently underway (Bible Study, Book Group, Confirmation Classes, Parish Forums, etc.) will continue to be conducted virtually online.
- The 2021 Parish Lenten Series, the North Shore Deanery Anti-Racism Training, and all other educational programming for the foreseeable future will be planned as online offerings.
- If and when we choose to offer in-person programming, indoor venues will be set up according to guidelines for safe distancing, proper ventilation, etc. and with required pre-registration to limit numbers of attendees, to gather contact information for contact tracing, and to instruct participants in advance of all safety measures to be observed.