

June 2, 2020

Dear Faithful and Friends of the Transfiguration Parish,

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 faithful stewards, families, and friends. ***That day will be this Sunday, June 7, the Feast of Pentecost.*** 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 your fellow parishioners from a safe distance.

The Church has dealt with epidemics and sickness throughout her history. The Church has strived to lift up the faithful and provide them in a pastoral, loving way the hope and grace of our Lord through prayer and worship. This is what we, as a parish, have tried to do, with new tools, such as live-streaming, local cable access TV, and social media. We pray we have been at least somewhat successful with these stopgap measures and now work toward bringing the faithful back to the church.

That being said, the Parish Council and I in no way want our parishioners to feel compelled to return to worship. Come, only if you feel comfortable. Many who share a heartfelt and deep sense of faith and love for Christ are still uncomfortable gathering for worship or are unable to gather because of other health issues. ***These are exceptional times and coming or not coming is not a statement about ones faith. Continue to join the Transfiguration family online for worship and one day we will be able to join together in one place, at one time to sing praise to our Lord for His love and all that is good.***

The Church is the place where we pray best, belong and celebrate community. However, in this time, and because of the unpredictable nature of this insidious virus, there are directives, rules, and limitations, which we must accept in order 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 and every 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.* This is an extended process that will be completed prior to our reopening. From this baseline, the building will be disinfected and sanitized between each service, including high traffic, high touch areas like bathrooms, doorknobs and handles, the elevator panels, etc.
- The congregation size for any service will be limited to 40% of the building’s official capacity. Due to social distancing requirements as well, we will limit attendance to 100.

- **Who Should Not Attend**

- 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 services via our Live Stream.
- If you are 65 years of age or older *without* known underlying health issues, we recommend you stay home and continue to participate in the services via our Live Stream.
- If you have any respiratory symptoms, fever or malaise at all, whether attributed to COVID-19 or not, *you must stay home*.

Arriving at Church:

- **Use of Masks**

- If you are attending services at the Church, **you must wear a protective mask** at all times upon entering the building except for the moment when you may be receiving Holy Communion.
 - If you are under medical instruction not to wear a mask, you must clearly indicate this to the “Greeter” upon entering. You will be given a sticker to wear so that others know.
 - If you are attending services with a child/children between the ages of two and five, a protective mask is at the discretion of the Parent. Children under the age of 2 should not wear a protective mask.
- You will be asked to use hand sanitizer as you enter the facility
 - *Parking is permitted only in the upper lots and the on-street Church Parking.* The gates to the lower lot will be locked.
 - Only the main entrance of the Church will be open. All other entrances will be locked.
 - The doors that are designated for entering and exiting the church, weather permitting, will be propped open to limit the need to touch the door handles and to provide better airflow into our facility.
 - The lower level including the Fellowship Hall and bathrooms will be closed and off limits for the foreseeable future. Restrooms will only be available in the upper level near the offices.
 - The elevator will be “hosted” by a Greeter to ensure only “residing household members” enter the elevator at any one time.
 - When entering the church you should venerate the icons by bowing. You should not kiss or make contact with any icon.
 - A Parish Council member who will assist you with candles, without contact, will staff the candle stand at the top of the staircase. You may purchase candles and vigil candles at that point. A Parish Council member will take your vigil candle to the front.
 - *Please follow the direction of the ushers* who will guide arriving parishioners into the Narthex to ensure appropriate distancing between arriving parishioners. Residing household family members may approach and light their candles together.
 - *Please use exact change. Change will not be made.* You may use a credit card if you desire. The Usher will assist you with the use of the credit card kiosk for your donations.

Seating in the Church:

- Seating inside the Church will be restricted to a 6 ft distance between parishioners. ***Immediate, residing household members may be seated together.*** The distancing will be to the left and right and front and back. It is imperative that we maintain appropriate distancing at all times. Ushers will be present to seat you at an appropriate distance from other parishioners inside the Church. Please do not seat yourself.
- Family members who are not part of the same residing household must sit 6 ft apart without exception.
- There will be markers throughout the Church to help assure appropriate distancing.

Receiving Holy Communion:

- The priest will administer Holy Communion in our traditional manner.
- *Please do not approach for Holy Communion until instructed to by the usher.* The line should form for Holy Communion in the center aisle with proper social distancing measures in place. Please follow the markings on the floor to ensure proper distancing. Following Holy Communion, the faithful will return to the pews by the proper one-way aisles only.
- *If you are approaching for Holy Communion, please tilt your head back and open your mouth widely* so that the priest can drop the Holy Communion into your mouth. **Please do not close your mouth on the spoon.**
- The faithful should not wipe their lips/mouth on the communion cloth.

Exiting the Church:

- *At the conclusion of the Liturgy you will exit as directed by the "Ushers" to receive antidoron row by row.* Please stand in line at the appropriate distance. The antidoron will be placed in your hands. There will be no kissing of the priest's hand, hugging, handshakes, or kissing.
- *Please place your offering in the basket in the back of the church/Narthex as you exit.* No offering basket will be passed in the church. Please be ready to place your offering into the collection basket so as not to slow the exit from the church.
- There will be no fellowship hour or gathering in groups following services.
- Please exit the church immediately upon receiving the antidoron and proceed to your vehicles.

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 faithful and their families 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 to be safe, healthy and able to worship in a manner that is best for our entire Parish family.

May God continue to bless you and your families keeping you safe an in His loving embrace!



Rev. Thomas Chininis
Parish Priest



Marc Gulezian
Parish Council President