

MOST REVEREND JOSEPH
ARCHBISHOP OF NEW YORK AND LOS ANGELES
METROPOLITAN OF NORTH AMERICA

V. REV. FATHER NABIL L. HANNA
DEAN



REV. FATHER PAUL OLSON
ASSISTANT PASTOR

REV. FATHER ANDREW S. ANDREWS
ASSISTANT PASTOR

St. Nicholas Antiochian Orthodox Christian Cathedral

2300 WEST 3RD STREET • LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90057

PHONE: (213) 382-6269 • FAX: (213) 382-0175

cathedral@stnicholasla.com • www.stnicholasla.com

Procedures for Reopening Indoor Church Services amid Social Distancing

Revised Wednesday, December 2, 2020

Guiding Principles

1. We believe that church services are “essential” and that it is possible to hold indoor services safely and legally¹.
2. The latest guidance from the Archdiocese allows churches to hold services with a percentage of capacity up to the legal limits, when deemed safe by the pastor and council.
3. We will follow CDC-recommended best practices. Additionally, we will ask a qualified specialist in infectious diseases to review our plan and make adjustments accordingly.
4. A basic stipulation of bringing our community back into the cathedral is that we must enforce strictly all safety protocols (outlined below).

General Policies and Notes

1. In the main seating area of the cathedral, there are 26 rows on each side that can accommodate more than 12 people each. Thus, *NOT counting the capacity of the chapel area nor the capacity of the choir loft*:
100% capacity = 624
50% capacity = 312
35% capacity = 218
2. To be very conservative, we will limit capacity to 200, not counting celebrants.
3. We will continue livestreaming services, but cameras must be pointed away from communicants during Holy Communion.

¹ Cf. the November 25, 2020, United States Supreme Court injunction decision in ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF BROOKLYN, NEW YORK v. ANDREW M. CUOMO, GOVERNOR OF NEW YORK.

4. We will keep the church closed for Saturday vespers (as this eliminates an extra cleaning).
5. All doors and windows will be open during services, and air circulation fans will run continuously. People should not need to touch any surfaces (such as door knobs) after others have touched them (unless they are wiped down with Clorox wipes first).
6. No admittance to hall or other areas (except for designated restrooms).
7. Coffee hour and all non-liturgical gatherings will not to resume at this point. Organizational meetings, Bible studies, etc., will continue online.
8. People will be required to register themselves and their household for a service at least 2 hours in advance.
9. People will sign up for Liturgies via our Eventbrite system. We will include notices on the Eventbrite site for parishioners to stay home if they have symptoms or are elderly or have been in contact with anyone whose been infected in the last 14 days, and other pertinent messages.
10. Admission will be by prior reservation only. Ushers will need to be ready to admit parishioners 15 minutes prior to the start of a service. *Only if there are openings in the advance reservations will someone who just shows up without a reservation be admitted, but we will not advertise this.*
11. The clergy can monitor the list of reservations and can address any abuses that might arise from people scheduling themselves too often, crowding out other faithful from the available slots.
12. Elderly, infirm, diabetics, and those who have asthma, heart conditions or any chronic illness will be strongly advised NOT to come to Liturgy but to participate via livestream services and then to schedule an appointment to come and partake of holy Communion. *We will not think less of anyone who is uncomfortable coming to church at the present time.*
13. Parishioners who have children that they can't control, who might run around and touch surfaces, will be advised to participate via livestream services and then to schedule an appointment to come and partake of holy Communion
14. Parishioners will be told to stay home if they are ill or exhibiting symptoms (even symptoms of a common cold), have tested positive for the coronavirus, or been exposed within the last 14 days to someone who has tested positive.
15. Parishioners will be screened upon entry for a fever and will be asked if they have tested positive for COVID-19 or been exposed to someone who has, or have any potential symptoms. Anyone who has a temperature great than 99.2F, is exhibiting other symptoms, or who does not pass the screening questions, will be asked to leave the church. They will be informed that they can make arrangements with the clergy for confession and communion at a later time.
16. The celebrant should not wear a face covering while serving but should consider doing so at all other times.
17. People will be instructed to bring their own face masks from home. We will also have some extra masks on hand.

18. Announcements will be made and signage posted in the narthex asking those who feel sick or have a fever to stay home and asking everyone to observe proper hygiene practices – proper handwashing, no hugging, handshakes, or kissing, etc.
19. Members of only ONE household may sit in a given pew (to avoid the prospect of people excusing themselves past another family). Ushers will seat households on alternating ends of successive pews.
20. To prevent people from crossing the path of others, the center aisle will be used only for eastward movement (toward the altar); the side aisles will be used only for westward movement. Once seated, people will be advised not to move except for Communion, for the restroom and when dismissed.
21. Entry into the Cathedral will be only through the narthex. Exiting the Cathedral will be only via the chapel (southeast) door.
22. Ushers should wear gloves. Others may also do so.
23. No collection baskets will be passed. People will be directed to the donation box at the candle stand for their tithes and offerings.
24. Clorox wipes should be available in the bathrooms. Parishioners should use these to wipe down surfaces before and after using the bathrooms and should ensure it is done after any children use the bathroom. *To be sure it is done, however, so people don't depend on others having wiped surfaces properly, parishioners should wipe down bathroom surfaces before they touch them.*
25. Bulletins may be handed out by a gloved usher.
26. Service books will be removed.
27. Hand sanitizer must be available at the entrances for the faithful to use upon entering and leaving the church.
28. Church may be open for individual prayer – no more than ten people at a time – by appointment or posted times.
29. Sacraments and funerals may be served with no more than the allowed number of persons in addition to the clergy at a time. Funerals are highly recommended to be done in funeral homes or at the gravesite due to the difficulty of regulating crowd sizes.
30. We will continue to offer Communion according to our Tradition, but all should allow the priest to pour the Body and Blood by opening their mouths wide and not closing their lips on the spoon. If the spoon does touch the mouth of the communicant, it should be wiped on the *kalima*.
31. An usher should be assigned to direct people in line for Communion or Antidoron spaced appropriately. Tape could be placed on the floor to further help with spacing.
32. The priest should cleanse his hands periodically through services – especially right before “Holy Things are for the Holy” and once again before giving Communion to the faithful.

33. Antidoron should be given by the priest or a server – either of whom must wear a plastic glove. The priest may wear a face covering to hand out antidoron and greet the faithful after the service.
34. The entire church will be thoroughly cleaned and sanitized before (or after) every service.

To Do in Preparation for Limited Opening (Sunday, December 6)

1. Remove all service books and other materials from pews.
2. Remove cushions from chairs.
3. Put neat signage on pews to indicate on which end households may be seated in alternating rows.
4. Put red tape squares neatly to mark every 6 feet up center aisle to mark spacing for Communion line.
5. Outside signage:
 - a. Admission limited: confirmed reservations required.
 - b. Do NOT enter if you have been exposed to Coronavirus, have any symptoms, are feeling unwell, are elderly or have any immune system deficiencies.
6. Instruct parishioners through email about how to sign up for services (at least 2 hours in advance), procedures and cautions for those who should not come to church.
7. Instruct ushers of their procedures, including how to do no-touch temperature checks.
8. Procure hand sanitizer pumps and refills, and place in narthex, lobby, bathrooms, etc.
9. Procure disinfectant wipes for ushers to wipe door handles and for individuals to use on bathroom surfaces.
10. Procure supply of face masks.
11. Procure disposable gloves.
12. Interior Signage:
 - a. Usher will do a quick, no-touch temperature check as you enter. Wearing of face masks required throughout service for all those above the age of 5.
 - b. Usher will seat members of the same household together, but keep at least 6 feet away from others. Once seated, please do not move except for Communion, for the restroom and when dismissed.
 - c. Enter through narthex only.
 - d. Exit by chapel area door only.
 - e. Place your tithes and offerings here. No collection baskets will be passed.

- f. Use provided disinfectant wipes to wipe door handles and all bathroom surfaces before you touch them.
13. Thorough cleaning and disinfecting by custodial crew.

Before Every Service

1. Custodial crew disinfects nave, bathrooms, door handles and all other surfaces.
2. Disinfecting will be done via wipe-downs *and* use of an electrostatic fogger.
3. Woodwork requires special care to disinfect without damaging the finish or getting a buildup of residue.
 - a. Step 1: Fill a spray bottle with 2 cups water, 1 cup white vinegar (and about five drops dish soap if the wood is soiled), and use this solution as your all-purpose wood cleaner and disinfectant. (The vinegar disinfects, and the dish soap works as an added cleaning element.)
 - b. Step 2: Spray the solution onto the wood furniture, and wipe off with a damp cleaning rag. Using a damp rag removes traces of the vinegar and soap. Continue across the wood furniture until the piece is cleaned and disinfected.
 - c. Step 3: Wipe the furniture with a dry cleaning rag to remove any excess moisture.
4. Doors and windows should be opened during and after services to allow fresh air into the building.

Procedures for Every Service

1. An usher will be stationed outside, as people approach from the parking, to greet and direct worshippers where to enter and regarding procedures *at least fifteen minutes before the start of services* (including 15 minutes before the start of matins, if matins is scheduled).
2. An usher in the narthex will ensure those who arrive are on the list of those who reserved spaces at that Liturgy and check them off. *This is necessary in case any contact tracing is required later. Only if there are openings in the advance reservations will someone who just shows up without a reservation be admitted, but we will not advertise this, and this parishioner will be advised of our mitigation procedures and the necessity of making an advance reservation in the future.* The usher must record their names for potential contact tracing.
3. Another usher will take quick temperature check for all parishioners as they enter. With gloves on, explaining what he's doing, user will take either a forehead or behind-ear temperature reading from 2-5 inches from skin. (Note behind-ear checks are more accurate than forehead readings for someone who has just entered the building from outside, where it is either significantly colder or hotter than the indoor temperature.) Those who have a temperature of 99.0°F will be urged to go home; those who have a temperature of 99.2°F or higher will be required to leave.
4. Bulletins will be handed out by a gloved usher. Attendees are asked to take their bulletins home with them.

5. Two ushers need to instruct parishioners where to sit, keeping at least six feet from other households, escorting them to their pews, filling up from the front of the church to the back.
6. A gloved usher will hand people candles that they buy, so that parishioners need not touch candles.
7. Ushers will be on hand to direct those who need to use bathrooms.
8. Ushers will direct people in exiting nave via open chapel/southeast door after service.

In the Event a Worshipper is Diagnosed with CoViD-19

1. All those who were present at a service with the infected person will be notified and advised to discuss their potential exposure with their own healthcare professionals.
2. Those potentially exposed will be advised not to return to the Cathedral until they have two negative tests for SARS-CoV-2 or 14 days have elapsed without symptoms.
3. The Cathedral will be doubly sanitized, and the faithful will not be admitted for at least 5 days from the time the infected person was last in the building.