



# CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

## Reading, MA

### Re-Gathering Plan

*Unanimously Approved by the Vestry on August 11, 2020*

The Church of the Good Shepherd is prepared to enter Phase II of *A Journey By Stages* and is requesting permission to begin on-site worship in a limited way. We have assembled a Re-Gathering Task Force which has made recommendations to the Vestry regarding re-opening. The Task Force will continue to meet on a regular basis to review our progress and evaluate our local circumstances. Our first priority is the safety and well-being of our members. We will continue to consult with DIOMASS and churches in our deanery as well as churches in the Reading Clergy Association for best practices and shared experiences.

We are requesting permission to re-open our church building for public worship beginning September 13, 2020 in a limited and controlled manner.

#### PREPARATION

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- Task Force members have attended DIOMASS Zoom meetings with Church Insurance and understand risks and liability. Our Task Force has a member who has experience in insurance claims and management.
- Ventilation: Mini-splits are installed in the church offices. They circulate fresh air from outdoors. Church windows and overhead fans will run during public worship. Exhaust fans run at night for further air circulation drawing cool fresh air from outdoors.
- Cleaning Disinfecting Plan:  
The parish has purchased ample supplies of Bioesque which is EPA-approved, works on all surfaces, and does not damage pews. We have also purchased Wood Scent Wood Polish by Guardsman as recommended by church furniture manufacturer Ratigan Schottler. This solution will remove any residual cleaning agents and will leave a protective coat of wax over the finish to help maintain the beauty and durability of the finish.

We have identified and trained staff and volunteers who are willing to disinfect high-touch surfaces prior to each service (doorknobs, bathrooms, railings, pews including the backs, microphones, shared instruments). Cleaners will wear gloves and masks.

We plan to have parishioners exit the church immediately following the service. The church will then be closed for a five days at which time the church will be thoroughly cleaned/disinfected prior to the up-coming Sunday service.

- Masks and Hand Sanitizer have been purchased and are readily available. We have a 12 month supply of professional grade sanitizer. Hand Sanitizer “stands” have been placed at all entrances to the church and office.
- Compliance posters have been posted in the office and on the church bulletin boards.
- Church office workspace plan has been reviewed with staff.
- Staff has been part of the re-gathering plan and discussions.
- Restroom use plan is in place. Restrooms will be disinfected prior to the Sunday Eucharist. Parishioners will be encouraged to use restroom only for emergencies (if possible). Disinfectant wipes, hand sanitizer, soap and warm water are available in the restroom. Signs will be posted with directions and reminders. Restrooms will be cleaned by our part-time cleaning service and not by parishioners.
- Signage, floor markings and pew markings are in place.

## GATHERING

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- Hymnals, prayer books, and Bibles have been removed from the church. The parish has the practice of publishing comprehensive bulletins and will continue to do so. Fonts have been emptied.
- Occupancy: 225 members. With distancing estimates, we plan on allowing a maximum of 30 parishioners in addition to the altar party.
- Attendee monitoring: Parishioners will be required to register through “Sign-Up Genius or REALM.” If requests are higher than the allotting attendance, a plan for alternating weeks will be put in place.
- Ushers/Staff: Ushers who are willing to serve have been trained and are prepared to assist.
- Parishioners will enter the church through a single entrance (“Bargain Box Entrance”) and depart through the Office entrance. The Woburn street church entrance will remain closed. Seating will occur from the front of the church to the back. This will help parishioners avoid crossing paths.

Following the service, the front pews will be dismissed followed by the back pews. Ushers will direct parishioners to exit through the side chapel entrance, to the Office Doors, and out to the outside walkway.

- Liturgy and music plan will follow Diocesan Guidelines.
- Offering plates are available at the entrance to the church. They are marked. Additional offering plates will be available as parishioners depart (for those not prepared as they enter). The collection will be placed in an envelope and kept sealed for 5 days prior to counting.
- We plan on permanently continuing our practice of livestreaming on FaceBook, YouTube and broadcasting on Cable TV: RCTV and NORCAM.
- Ancillary gatherings: We will not be holding Coffee Hours during Stage II.

## SERVING

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- Pastoral Care Plan: We will continue calling parishioners on a regular basis. All members have access to virtual worship through FaceBook, YouTube and local cable access. Anointings will be done as requested.
- Community Service Plans: We do not plan on initiating our regular volunteering during Phase II. This includes Bread of Life and the Bargain Box. Outside groups will be considered during Phase III but will likely not return until Phase IV.
- Local Health Department contact information is on file at the office.
- Online Giving through Realm is in place and is used regularly by parishioners.
- Small groups will not meet until we are further along into Stage II. The upper church hall has proper ventilation and can accommodate small group meetings of up to 15 people. We will consider using this space once the church re-opening has progressed.
- We will not be providing childcare during Phase II. The majority of our younger families with children have indicated that they do not plan on returning until Stage III or IV.
- Online Formation Program: We will continue our “Wednesdays at Good Shepherd.” This is a weekly Zoom gathering for prayer and faith formation. Youth Formation will continue through “at home” materials and projects. We will explore Zoom opportunities to bring our youth together.

## CHURCH OFFICE

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We will continue our current plan of keeping the office closed to parishioners. The office will be open to parishioners during Phase II by appointment only. We have a “counter” that is 10 feet away from the administrator’s desk and serves to properly keep distance. Masks will be worn by parishioners and the administrator (when in contact with parishioners or other staff). Our staff meets weekly on Mondays via Zoom.

## BARGAIN BOX (THRIFT STORE)

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At this time, the Bargain Box will continue to be closed to the public and will not accept donations. The Re-Gathering Task Force will make future recommendations based on safely progressing through the various stages of re-opening. They will consider limited possibilities for the volunteers to work in the Bargain Box once we are further into Stage II.

#### OUTSIDE GROUPS/OVER EATERS ANONYMOUS (OA)

The parish appreciates the special role support groups play in the life of our community. Supporting OA Groups is part of our outreach. Due to limited resources for proper monitoring and cleaning, liabilities and limited staff, the parish will remain closed to outside groups until we are in Stage IV of *A Journey by Stages*.

#### OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- In the event a member contracts COVID-19, the parish will follow all protocols issued by the Diocese, including reporting the incident to the Reading Board of Health.
- We will continue to adopt guidelines issued by the Diocese, including "A Journey By Stages Expanded Guidance 08-06-2020."

Faithfully submitted August 11, 2020  
The Re-Gathering Task Force Committee

Rev. Brian Raiche; Rev. Pete Jeffrey; Jane Farrar (Senior Warden); Bob Newton (Jr. Warden); Alice Hannon (Music Director); Spencer Dalby (Vestry); Nancy Fraser, Barbara Luddy (Vestry); Kim Manzelli; Ted and Nancy Smethurst, Joyce Witham (Vestry).

*Thomas said to Jesus, "Lord we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?"  
Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." John 14:5-6*