

Revised COVID Directives
St. Nicholas Orthodox Church
Pittsfield, MA
June 14, 2021

Based on new Revised Directives from Met. Tikhon, 5/29/2021

1. These new guidelines have been approved by the Parish Council at the June 3 Council Meeting, approved by Fr. John, and reflect the general directives from His Beatitude.
2. The new guidelines meet with newest local and state guidelines regarding COVID safety in indoor and outdoor activities.
3. The new guidelines reflect the agreement of Parish Council members and are unique to St. Nicholas Church (not based on other churches or Dioceses). We affirm that these guidelines come from an Orthodox Christian love for the welfare of all members of our church family. There should in no way be judgements or criticism made by church family members regarding another member's decision to wear masks or decision about getting vaccinations for COVID-19.
4. **Vaccines:** We are in agreement with Met. Tikhon that the decision to get a vaccine or not is the sole choice of each individual; we understand that our Hierarchs have embraced the morality of COVID vaccinations as they have been developed to alleviate suffering and death. Please treat each other with charity and love, regardless of an individual's decision to get vaccinated.
5. **Masks:** Guidelines for masks follow the CDC recommendation that non-vaccinated adults **should continue to wear a mask**. Vaccinated adults should feel free about their decisions to wear or not wear a mask. The CDC encourages the removal of masks for the **vaccinated only**. There will be no shaming for either wearing or not wearing a mask. We will continue to monitor state and local mandates should there be an uptick in COVID cases that require again wearing masks.
6. **Temperatures:** we will no longer take temperatures at the door to the church or other buildings used by the church.
7. **Pre-Registration:** we no longer require pre-registration to attend a service.
8. **List of Participants:** until further notice we will still keep a sign-in list of attendees for church events/services. This is for health/safety reasons should someone going forward test positive for COVID-19. In the event of an outbreak or a positive

COVID-19 test the Parish Council will confer with our Chancellor/Priest-Administrative about how best to respond.

9. **Social Distancing:** for now we will keep the 6 foot distancing requirement inside the church. Families, of course, can sit closer together. We can feel freer outside when we gather in good weather for church activities (e.g. fellowship after liturgies). We may move to 3 foot distancing as more people are vaccinated and COVID cases continue to decline here.
10. **Candles and Prayers for the Living and the Reposed:** our candle stand is now open and individuals may leave a donation for candles; you may also leave your prayer lists there for our ushers to take them to the altar for blessing.
11. **Singing:** we have expanded our singing — parishioners may sing quietly, along with the singers in front at the music stands.
12. **Liturgy Books and Handouts:** we may distribute hymn handouts and parishioners may use our church liturgy books.
13. **Communion:** we will continue the current practice of individual spoons and napkins until further notice. As the Metropolitan has said, the goal of the Holy Synod is eventually to resume the single spoon practice.
14. **Icon and Cross Veneration:** the kissing/physical veneration of icons/cross is a practice we have missed during COVID restrictions; it is still an individual choice; we should continue to bow out of love and respect.
15. **Coffee Hours:** We resume fellowship time after services out of doors as weather permits. The Parish Council has voted to **vastly simplify** coffee hour and are asking helpers/hosts to bring one item of food. This could be **one** of the following: muffins, rolls, cookies, crackers with cheese, a cake, etc. We encourage both women and men to sign up as “hosts”. The church will provide coffee/tea, cups, plates, napkins, etc. We have a small refrigerator in the garage for milk/juice/and half and half. We hope everyone will help with cleanup afterwards.
16. **In person meetings:** Using ZOOM has greatly helped us for meetings. There may be times, however, when meeting in person would allow for a more in-depth discussion. The Council would like to resume in-person meetings soon to facilitate freer discussions without the interruption of technical blips and difficulty in hearing each other. Meeting outdoors is a good way to transition to more conventional in-person meetings.