Covid-19 Priorities and Guidelines

**St. John’s, Gig Harbor** March 8, 2020

*On March 8, 2020 the rector convened a meeting of: the clergy, the church wardens, and representatives of the Pastoral Care Team. Our goal was to establish a preliminary document articulating priorities and guidelines our parish leaders can follow as we reorganize ourselves for mission in the face of Covid-19. This document can be revised as the circumstances develop and we continue to learn how best to be the church in these days.*

**Priorities**

1. We want to keep people alive

*The underlying goal in all we do is to help slow the spread of the virus, keeping alive both parishioners and the network of our relationships.*

1. We will communicate effectively

*The circumstances of this crisis are developing rapidly, naturally leading to fear and anxiety. Therefore, we must act swiftly to develop effective methods of communication that provide useful information and resources that are clear, accurate, and rooted in the stability of our parish mission.*

1. We will be particularly attentive to the needs of seniors and other vulnerable people in isolation

Prolonged isolation is devastating for physical, mental, and spiritual health. We must remain mindful of this reality and pursue creative ministries to address it.

1. Everything is worth considering

*In order to provide the best ministry possible in these circumstances, any new idea is worth considering; the continuation of any established practice can be reconsidered.*

1. The welfare of Outside Groups and Mission Partners remains within the sphere of our concern

*Groups that use St. John’s (e.g. AA, etc.) and ministries we support (e.g. FISH, etc.) are part of our parish and our mission; therefore, the decisions we make must include a commitment to their well-being.*

1. We want to emerge from this season as a healthy and vibrant community

*The changes and choices we’re making during this crisis should foster the ongoing growth and formation of our parish so that – when it is over – we have not only survived, but we have emerged healthier and more alive to our mission.*

**Guidelines**

1. Attendance

* All communication (expressed or implied) reiterates that the safest practice (which we endorse) is to refrain from public gatherings, especially for those over 60 and with compromised health.
* We respect the autonomy of individuals to make their own risk assessment and determine for themselves whether to participate.
* However, if one: shows signs of illness (esp. fever, cough, difficulty breathing), is in a household with someone who shows signs of illness, or is known to have been exposed to covid-19, they must not come to a St. John’s gathering.
* We will create distinctive worship services that are expressly “reserved for people choosing a deliberately cautious lifestyle” during this season. (i.e. those who are mainly staying at home and refraining from engaging in the community at large.) We recognize that they will need safe places to “risk” attending in order to disrupt the dangers of isolation.

1. Hygiene

Any assembly of St. John’s must follow the following procedures:

* Surfaces are sanitized before and after assembly.
* When people arrive, they wash (preferably) or sanitize their hands.
* We refrain from touching each other. (Elbow or foot bumps are fine.)
* We are mindful of keeping generous space between us: optimally six feet (= two arm’s distance).

Conveners of any meeting commit to the following practices:

* Arriving early to sanitize surfaces that will be used by the group.
* Graciously enforcing these hygiene and food rules with all those attending.
* Before leaving, ensuring the group sanitizes all surfaces they’ve touched.

1. Food

At Gatherings

* No homemade food shall be prepared or served.
* Pre-packaged, single serving food may be served (by a single, designated server who has washed hands thoroughly).
* Coffee and beverages can be served by a single, designated server who has washed hands thoroughly before preparation and who alone will dispense and distribute drinks (including sugar, cream, stirrers, etc.). No guests shall touch any of the beverage supplies except what they have been handed.
* “Brown-bag” meals are acceptable.

Food Delivery (e.g. “Take them a meal.com)

* If anyone shows signs of sickness (see “Attendance” section above) they will recuse themselves from meal delivery.
* Homemade dishes are restricted to those that must be put in the oven by the recipient.
* Prepackaged food (e.g. Salad in a bag) is permissible.

1. Rooms usage

*Rooms shall be chosen that permit the number of those assembling to maintain a generous space between them.*

* St. John’s will establish an occupancy suggestion for each gathering space.