

THE CHURCH OF THE EPIPHANY
Regathering for Worship Prayerfully and Intentionally
PHASE A
July 30, 2020

Note: The below procedures relate directly to worship services of the Church of the Epiphany. It is important to note that they are in addition to the overall directives given to all church groups meeting in the Anglican Centre (see Addendum: "Re-opening Protocol for Guest Congregations").

A Way Forward - An Introduction

Our time of closure has come to an end as the Qatar government under which we operate relaxes its prohibitions on worship in churches and mosques.

At the Church of the Epiphany, we are rightly eager to move toward what will be, for all of us, not a return to the old "normal," but the development of a new normal. For the foreseeable future, due to both restrictions imposed by authorities and practices commended by our call to care for each other, our worship services or the foreseeable future will look different from those in the past.

It is also the case that some of our members will wish to remain engaged with us through virtual connections (live-streaming) to minimize risks of exposure to Covid-19.

In some ways, the church's closure, has given us a keener appreciation for the value of our practices of gathering and worship. In other ways, this extended closure has brought about the expression of creativity (i.e. virtual) and new forms of community, many of which hold the potential to help us better and more effectively respond to God's call in mission and service in the world.

These realities point toward the need for the period in which the coronavirus pandemic remains a potential among us, to shape our work and worship along new lines. We are not able to simply return fully to former ways at this time; we must adapt them in ways responsive to this highly communicable virus, while at the same time honoring and maintaining the very real advances we have made in gathering our church community for worship, fellowship and outreach, using new tools and new platforms.

In this regard, a thoughtful and prayerful way forward for regathering our church community has been developed, with the understanding that this will be revised as developments warrant, understanding that this will naturally be a phased relaxation of restrictions.

Worship Services

Our gathering for worship in the church (sanctuary or chapel) will follow the guidelines for social and religious gatherings set out by MoPH and as directed by MoFA.

- This includes limitations on the number of people who may be present, and the social distancing space to be maintained between people in a gathered setting.

- During the first phase of re-opening, which we are referring to as Phase A, this will mean that people will be seated in the pews in marked spaces (with stickers) that are 1.5 meters apart. The seating spots in the pews will be staggered to ensure no one is sitting directly in front of another.
 - Note: Members of household groups living in the same space will not be required to observe separation from each other; but as a group they should observe the 1.5-meter physical separation from others.
- The choir on the balcony must also observe these requirements.
- All visitors will be asked to come early.
- All visitors will be asked to enter the building through the two designated entrances, instead of via the church office (which will be closed).
- All entering the sanctuary or chapel will be asked to use the self-sanitizing hand dispensers at the entrance to disinfect their hands.
- All congregants will be required to wear face masks throughout the entirety of the worship service, with the exception of consuming the Eucharistic bread, when Holy Communion is celebrated.
- The clergy leading a worship service may do so without a mask if they maintain a 1.5-meter distance from others in the altar area.
- Any printed materials (i.e. announcement sheet) will be placed in advance on the seating locations in the worship space.
- There should be no physical contact between congregants. The peace should be exchanged without physical contact.
- The offering will not to be collected by passing offering bags. A secure offering collection box will be positioned at the entrance in order to receive in-present offerings, which will be monitored for security the entire service. However, we strongly encourage people to continue to make their pledges, tithes and offering contributions by means of electronic bank transfer to the church account.
- When the Eucharist is celebrated, it will not include the sharing of wine. While it is suggested by some that we use small individual cups, beyond the fact that they are not available in Qatar, it has been shown that even the use of individual cups involves recipients often touching a tray of closely-spaced cups. There is also the the risk of contamination to those throwing away the used cups.
 - All those assisting during the celebration of Eucharist should use hand sanitizer immediately before the Eucharistic prayer, and this must be done in the sight of the people.

- Sanitizer should be used once again by the clergy before the distribution of communion bread.
- The bread that the celebrant breaks during the celebration of the Eucharist, is to be consumed only by the celebrant and not made part of the distributed Eucharist.
- The clergy are to wear masks during the distribution of communion to the people.
- Those receiving the Eucharist should maintain a 1.5-meter distance while in the line approaching the front.
- The communion rail will not be used. Congregants will approach the priest one by one to receive the sacrament while maintaining 1.5-meters of separation at all times in line.
- The priest will place a consecrated bread in each parishioner's hands, being careful not to touch a hand or body part. If touching accidentally occurs, the priest will return to the credence table sanitize his hands again.
- Congregants will return to their seats before briefly lifting their masks to consume the bread.
- The Priest will place any remaining consecrated bread on the credence table, to be removed and disposed of in an appropriate manner (not consumed), following the service.
- Blessings of children or individuals will be done without any physical touch.
- The sanctuary and chapel will be disinfected after each service, as well as all equipment used in it.
- Live-streaming of Friday worship services will continue, as well as virtual formation offerings, as a permanent extension of the ministry of our church.
- In-person gatherings for fellowship (coffee/tea time, etc.) will be suspended (i.e. Corinth Hall, Epiphany Room, etc.) for the foreseeable future.
- The use of the Cry Room/Creche for infants will be suspended for the time being.
- Friday School programs and any adult formation offerings will continue as virtual platforms until schools re-open in Qatar, and will then follow the procedures that schools are required to follow when gathering in classrooms.
- Any ministry involving the laying on of hands will be suspended.

- At the conclusion of all worship services, clergy will not stand in the doorway to greet departing people.

Ministries of Service related to Worship

- Those preparing the altar for worship must do so while observing physical distancing requirements. They must also sanitize their hands prior to preparing the altar.
- All those counting a collection should (a) wear masks, (b) wear gloves, and (c) prepare the collection for deposit in sealed envelopes.

The Work of the Church

- All church council, board, committee and task force meetings should take place using virtual meeting technologies during Phase A.
- All educational/formation programs of the church will be held virtually during Phase A.

Addendum

Re-opening Protocol for Guest Congregations Meeting at the Anglican Centre Phase A July 29, 2020

FOUNDATIONAL PROCEDURES

The below safety procedures and protocol are for what we are terming as Phase A at the Anglican Centre. There will also be a Phase B and Phase C, gradually loosening the restrictions as we work toward eventual restoration of full capacity, always strictly following MoPH and MoFA guidelines.

- 1) We will be following the MoPH's and MoFA's guidelines, and liaising with the Christian Churches Steering Committee (CCSC).
- 2) Designated stewards will be appointed to monitor compliance at the two entrances and two exits of the Anglican Centre and in all 8 sections of the building (4 on ground floor and 4 on 1st floor). Their role is to ensure compliance with the below safety requirements and procedures.
- 3) The hall usage time for each guest congregation will be for a maximum of 90 minutes, in order to allow for one hour between worship services as per MoPH's requirements for sanitizing /disinfecting the halls. The 90-minute time slots include set-up and any preparation, as well as any equipment take down.
- 4) The Anglican Centre has sought to align the 90-minute time slots to be as close as possible to each congregation's original weekend meeting schedule.
- 5) The Anglican Centre will communicate with each congregation pastor/leader separately to share with them the "social distancing hall capacity" for their respective worship hall.
- 6) Some congregations that typically used the Philippi Hall will be meeting in a new hall and the Anglican Centre will be in touch with them about the new space for their worship.
- 7) All entering the building will need to be on the list of attendees received in advance by the pastor/leader of each guest congregation, using the Anglican Centre template that is provided. The completed template of names for each congregation will need to be received by the Anglican Centre by 3:00 pm every Wednesday for Friday or Saturday worship times, and two days in advance of a worship time held during the week.
- 8) Face masks will be required at all times.
- 9) Vulnerable Persons during Phase A: Adults over the age of 60 are advised not to attend religious gatherings. Children under the age of 12 are advised not to attend.

- 10) All guest congregation pastors, leaders and attendees are expected to abide by the safety procedures and relate respectfully to the stewards on duty.
- 11) Car entry passes will not be initially provided at this time. All entering the Religious Complex will need to do so through the main security gate adjacent to the parking lot.

SAFETY PROCEDURES WILL ENTAIL THE FOLLOWING:

Entrance registration and set-up

- There will be two designated entrances and two designated exits to the building. At each entrance there will be two stewards which will be responsible for the following:
 - Registering the name and tel number for each visitor and the hall name of the worship service they will be attending (based on the submitted Template of Attendees received by each respective guest congregation. No one will be allowed entry unless they are on the list submitted by that guest congregation's pastor/leader.
 - This guarantees that the "social distancing hall capacity" is not exceeded, and also allows for contact tracing if needed.
 - Individuals with chronic and complex conditions are advised not to attend.
 - Making sure all are wearing face masks, taking each person's temperature and assuring that each individual sanitizes their hands just prior to entry.
 - Monitoring the social distancing (1.5 meters) between those lining up to register and enter.
 - All individuals or family units (if together with visiting members of same household) need to show their Ehteraz app and it will be verified as being green.
- Canopy tents will be set up at each entrance to help provide shade at the entry together with large fans with a cool spray mist.
- A table with a protective plastic shield positioned on it will also be in place for the registering process.
- A self-sanitizing device will be installed at each entrance

Face masks

- Any individual without a face mask will not be allowed access to the Anglican Centre.
- Wearing a face mask is mandatory for every individual during the course of time they spend inside the Anglican Centre. The pastor/leader/preacher may take off the mask during the sermon if a he/she is a considerable distance from the first row.

Social distancing

- Congregants will be allowed to enter the Anglican Centre only during their respective booked service schedule and upon confirmation at the entrance that their name is on the list submitted by their congregation's pastor/leader. No early access or waiting is permitted. The placement of stickers will help to guarantee social distancing while waiting in line to enter.
- Initially, each hall will be allowed only the capacity that 1.5-meter social distancing allows (social distancing capacity and sitting placement has been determined for each hall by the Anglican Centre).
- The MoPH social distancing requirement between individuals, will be set in place for all guests attending services in the halls – the seats will be arranged accordingly, with the spaces marked.
- Every individual must maintain the 1.5-meter social distance throughout the time at the Anglican Centre (while entering, moving around, worship, Holy Communion and exiting the premises).
- The capacity for the public toilets will be restricted to 3 at a time, and those waiting in line to use the toilet must maintain 1.5-meter social distance between each person.
- No socializing (i.e. gatherings for fellowship or refreshments) at the Anglican Centre's premises will be allowed in Phase A. All will be required to leave the premises immediately after their respective worship service.
- All water dispensers in hallways will be removed, so as to not be gathering points. Guest congregations may organize tiny water bottles (maximum 500 ml) for their members on their own.
- Extra trash bins will be made available throughout the building.
- Common areas where people gather will be closed off, such as the lobby area.
- No physical contact should be made between congregants/pastor/leader – i.e. greeting one another or the giving of the peace should be exchanged without physical contact and no laying on of hands during prayer for individuals or for anointing of the sick should take place.
- The use of the outside baptistry will be suspended for the foreseeable future.
- No one should be standing near the entrance/exit of the halls.

Holy Communion & Offering

- If Holy Communion is celebrated, those receiving the elements should maintain appropriate physical distancing while doing so (1.5 meters) - both when approaching the place of distribution, and the separation between those receiving.

- A “Common cup” for Holy Communion cannot be used. If wine/juice is served, then it has to be with disposable tiny plastic cups. Otherwise, only pre-cut bread/wafers can be offered.
- The offering should not be collected by passing offering plates/bags. Plates/boxes may be positioned at secure places in the hall to receive offerings.

Corinth Hall

- Corinth Hall for fellowship purposes will be closed indefinitely. No fellowship/meeting/greeting and or food/refreshment from outside will be allowed.
- Cafeteria shops will remain closed for the foreseeable future.

Sanitization

- Self-sanitizing devices will be available in all toilets and on the walls of each hallway.
- Toilets will be sanitized throughout the day on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays.
- Every hall will be sanitized between worship services...after a service and before the next one begins.
- All halls will be thoroughly sanitized at the end of the day on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays.
- High traffic areas will be disinfected throughout the day