



# ASSUMPTION GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

601 South Central Avenue ☩ Chicago, Illinois 60644-5089

July 1, 2020

Dear Fellow Stewards of the Assumption Church,

Greetings in the Lord.

Over the past few months, we have all endured many different setbacks in life. "Unprecedented" is the word that has been used over and over. The last several months have been difficult for all of us. Working directly with the Metropolitan and the Parish Council I have guided our parish the best I could through this time. I have tried to keep you posted on the developments in the parish through emails, weekly Zoom meetings, phone calls, etc. Please know that all the decisions have been made out of love and concern for everyone's well being. The vast majority of our parishioners, together with the Parish Council have appreciated the approach and have been quite supportive, expressing to me their love, gratitude, and support. Of which, I am thankful. Please also know that all the decisions that have been made over this time have been discussed and approved by the Metropolitan. He has been very supportive and understanding during this time and has commended me and our Parish on our approach through this "unprecedented" time.

The time is here when we are reopening our doors to embrace parishioners back into the services. I, together with our Parish Covid-19 Safety Team, and Parish Council. have been working hard to make this happen. Our church has been professionally cleaned and will continue to be professionally cleaned and sanitized for every church service. Procedures and checklists are in place. The Parish Council and COVID Safety Team are making sure all the guidelines and procedures are consistently followed, in order to appropriately and safely have the parishioners' experience be as best as it can be under the circumstances.

With the Metropolis' approval, which we received on 6/29/2020, we will be opening our doors to 50 people (total) on Sunday, July 5th. Although you may see more parishioners allowed in other churches in the suburbs, 50 people are the maximum amount of people allowed within the City of Chicago. If this goes up, I will make sure to notify you and we will make the adjustments on registrations to include the increase.

For each service, parishioners will have to register and be approved to attend. Please note that parishioners can not just "show up" to church, but must receive confirmation that they can attend a particular church service through their online registration. The doors to the church will still remain locked as is required. We currently have a registration link on our website to "sign up" to come to church. Because of the amount of parishioners, and the need to be "fair" for as many different parishioners to attend, you will only be allowed to register for one service per time frame posted. Please understand that we will have hundreds of parishioners and requesting to attend a service is not going to be possible for everyone to attend each service. The way the registration is designed will prevent a person or a family from signing up for multiple services at a time. We want everyone to have the opportunity to attend. I also realize that some parishioners may not be computer savvy. I ask that anyone who may not have a computer, please contact another parishioner who can help them to register online to attend a service. Because we are required to keep records of contact tracing for 1 year, we can not accept email registrations or phone call requests to attend services. Again, we will not be taking requests or reservations to attend services over the phone, nor through email. All registrations must be done online. I know for some this may not be ideal and take some outreach to accomplish, but online registration will be the only method to register to attend a service.

I know that many of you are thinking about our Feast Day on August 15th. I am waiting to see what the restrictions will be like at that time in the City. It is my prayer that restriction will lighten up even more. However, as of now, we will have the same registration process in effect, and the church will remain locked, and by

registration only. In order to accommodate the number of people that will want to be in church on those important days, I am finalizing a multi-service observance. In other words, we will have multiple services during those days. In this way, we can open each service to 50 people. Through multiple services, we will be able to minister to many more people throughout those days. Registering for the services will still be in effect, and until further notice. Please spread the word that parishioners and friends of Assumption can not just "show up". If we have other developments or changes, I will notify all of you, but, as of now, these current restrictions are in place until further notice.

There are several things that you should know. There is no coffee hour or receptions until further notice. The liturgy books have been removed from the pews. No andithoron will be distributed. No trays will be passed. No weekly bulletin will be distributed. The Assumption Church COVID Safety Committee, under the direction of the Metropolis of Chicago, has developed Parishioner Guidelines for the Covid-19 Pandemic. The guidelines are rules that need to be followed by everyone at all times. We request that you read these Parishioner Guidelines carefully. They will be strictly enforced because we are required to maintain them. The Parishioner Guidelines will be updated periodically as circumstances warrant. For the most current version, please visit the church website at [www.assumptionchicago.org](http://www.assumptionchicago.org)

**Assumption Greek Orthodox Church of Chicago  
Parishioner Guidelines for the Covid-19 Pandemic:**

**REQUIREMENTS:**

**REGISTRATION:**

1. No one will be allowed church entry unless he/she has made an online reservation in advance.
2. No substitutions are allowed.
3. Doors to the church will remain locked prior to, and throughout the service.
4. Reservations for church services can be made on the church website, [www.assumptionchicago.org](http://www.assumptionchicago.org)
5. Only those receiving a confirmation can attend a particular service.
6. Parishioners in the high-risk category are encouraged to continue to participate in our online streaming.
7. Although other churches in Illinois may have larger numbers than 50, the City of Chicago at the time of this letter restricts attendance to a total of 50 people in the church.

**ARRIVAL:**

1. Each person who attends will need to check in with a COVID Safety Team Member at the lower level entrance into the St. Catherine Chapel (down the North exterior staircase). This will be the only entry into the church. If you need to use the elevator, a Team Member will be directed to open the door for you.
2. You must knock on the door when you arrive, as it is locked.
3. An Usher will open the door for you.
4. You will not be allowed to enter without a face covering both your mouth and nose.
5. A team member will check your name from the list of registered attendees.
6. Your temperature will be taken by a non-contact infrared thermometer. Anyone with a temperature of 99.5 Degrees or higher will not be admitted.
7. You will sanitize your hands at the sanitizing station at the entrance and proceed to follow the signs to the Narthex.
8. Please arrive before Liturgy begins at 10 am. After 10:30, the entry door will not be attended, so on your day of attendance, please arrive before 10:30 am in order to enter.

**PPE/MASK:**

1. Everyone attending services is expected to wear a mask to cover the mouth and the entire nose. Gloves are optional.
2. The mask must be kept on fully for your entire time at church.
3. The mask may only be removed when you receive Holy Communion.

4. After receiving Holy Communion, you shall replace your mask prior to walking off of the Solea, and it shall stay on for the remainder of your time in church.

#### **DISTANCING: "Social Distancing"**

1. Always maintain a six-foot separation between non-family members in all areas of the church.
2. Pews are marked off as to where you can sit and are distanced from each other.
3. The Ushers will direct parishioners to the open pews to accomplish social distancing.
4. Parishioners will also maintain a six-foot separation when approaching to receive or Holy Communion and at all times in the church facility.
5. Do not kiss the priest's hand and refrain from shaking the hands of other parishioners.

#### **OFFERING AND CANDLES:**

1. Online donations are strongly preferred.
2. You can make your online donation by clicking the green "GIVE" button on our church website. [www.assumptionchicago.org](http://www.assumptionchicago.org).
3. We will accept cash donations at the candle stand, but no giving back of change or breaking large bills will be done by Ushers at the Pangari/Candle Stand.
4. The usher will be wearing a face-covering/mask and will be wearing gloves to hand you your candle.
5. You will be guided to the candle stands to light your candle and honor the icons by reverently bowing.
6. Kissing of the icons or any other items anywhere in church is not permitted at any time.
7. You will sanitize your hands again at the sanitizing station in the doorway of the Nave of the church.

#### **IN CHURCH:**

1. The usher will guide you to your seat through the main doors.
2. You will sanitize your hands again at the sanitizing station in the doorway of the Nave of the church.
3. Immediate family members may sit together.
4. Individual parishioners and non-family members will sit 6 feet apart.
5. You are not permitted to change seats at any time during the service, or after Holy Communion.
6. At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, you will be dismissed by the usher.
7. The priest will offer a blessing from a distance.
8. There is no andithoron, nor the distribution of Kolyva if brought for a memorial.
9. Parishioners exit the church through the exit doors on the West/North side of the Narthex.
10. There are no post-liturg gatherings or coffee hours permitted at this time.

#### **HOLY COMMUNION:**

1. Your mask must be kept on fully for the duration of the service.
2. The usher will lead you forward if you are intending to receive Holy Communion.
3. Your mask will remain at this point.
4. As you reach the Solea, use sanitizer to clean your hand thoroughly at the visible sanitizing station at the base of the Solea before approaching to receiving Holy Communion.
5. Observe social distancing at all times by standing on the marked floor signs indicating where to stand.
6. Only ONE person at a time will be allowed on the Solea. You are asked to wait on the carpet floor markers until it is your turn to come on to the Solea. Please wait until the person in front of you is completely off the Solea before you come forward on to the Solea to receive Holy Communion.
7. When you come forward to receive Communion, please say your name first, and then lower your mask.
8. The mask may only be removed when someone is about to receive Holy Communion.
9. Hold the cloth under your chin.
10. Receive communion as usual.
11. Do not blot or wipe your mouth on the cloth after receiving Holy Communion.
12. Immediately after receiving Communion, you shall put your mask, and then walk back to your seat.
13. No andithoron is offered during any of the services.
14. The priests have been directed to wear face coverings when administering Holy Communion.

#### **DISMISSAL AND EXIT:**

1. The priest will offer a blessing from a distance.
2. There is no andithoron, nor the distribution of Kolyva if brought for a memorial.
3. Parishioners exit the church through the exit doors on the West/North side of the Narthex while maintaining social distancing.
4. Face masks will remain on until parishioners exit the church facility.
5. There are no post-liturgy gatherings or coffee hours permitted at this time at any church.

**USE OF RESTROOMS:**

1. Only one person at a time is allowed in a Restroom.
2. Upon arrival at a Restroom, please call out to ask if someone is inside.
3. If someone is inside, please wait until they are finished.
4. Upon their exit from the Restroom, you are permitted to enter.
5. Please make sure to wash your hands thoroughly.
6. Upon re-entry into the Narthex, you will be required to sanitize your hands again at the sanitizing station in the doorway to the Nave.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. If you desire to follow along, please bring your own liturgy book and/or bible. There are no books allowed in the church pews. Liturgical readings can be found on <https://www.goarch.org/chapel/calendar>
2. If you need water for medical reasons, please bring your own container of water. The drinking fountains are not in service.

**IMPORTANT NOTE: COVID-19 is invisible, unpredictable, and often undetectable. If you are not feeling well, you need to stay at home. If you have had a recent fever, please watch the service on the internet. While wearing a mask, practicing social distancing, and thorough cleaning helps prevent the spread of the disease, it is not a foolproof measure. Most people who contract COVID-19 recover. However, those who are elderly may have Diabetes, COPD/Lung Disease, Heart Disease, etc, in addition to those who may be battling other diseases, such as cancer, are high risk for serious illness, complications, and/or death if they contract COVID-19. For this reason, we ask that anyone in the high-risk category, refrain from attending services until the Virus is no longer a threat. Anyone attending services does so at their own risk. By registering online to attend the services or church, you agree to release and not sue (litigate against) Assumption Greek Orthodox Church (the Parish) if you or someone in your family get sick due to attending church; even if an usher or other church employee or volunteer does something wrong by mistake, and you will not seek to hold the Parish legally responsible in court, arbitration or other place if anyone in your family gets sick. Please know that the Church will continue to live stream every service over the internet at [www.assumptionchicago.org](http://www.assumptionchicago.org)**

I know all of this is new for everyone. I ask for your prayers and patience as we move through this time. On behalf of our COVID Safety Team and Parish Council, I express my gratitude for your love for our church.

With Paternal Blessings,

Rev. Dr. Peter J. Spiro  
Protopresbyter  
Assumption Greek Orthodox Church