

# St. Mark's Catholic Community

## Epidemic Response Plan

March 13, 2020

*This plan has been approved by Fr. Ben Uhlenkott and endorsed by the St. Mark's Parish Council.*

This plan follows protocols and guidelines from the Center for Disease Control, White House, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and Roman Catholic Diocese of Boise.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/>

<https://www.cdc.gov/>

<http://www.usccb.org/about/>

<https://www.catholicidaho.org/>

# NOTE

While this plan has very specific actions and directions, it will not be exhaustive, as the parish will need to adjust to changing conditions, directions, and challenges. Please ensure your contact information is up-to-date in the Parish Office, and check sources of communication (email, Facebook, Bulletin, etc.) for updates.

# Overview

Four key questions are answered in this plan. How will St. Mark's:

1. reduce people's chances of getting sick or dying;
2. respond to the needs of those who are sick, anxious, in economic crisis, or grieving;
3. adapt parish operations and respond to social disruption if many people are ill, or health officials recommend social distancing
4. recover spiritually, socially, and financially as a parish once the crisis ends.

# Overview

This plan details how the Church will spiritually, socially, and financially respond to the current health and financial crisis at four stages:

- I. Prevention
- II. Infection
- III. Social Disruption
- IV. Recovery

# Prevention

While people are still coming to Mass, we must take every precaution possible to prevent spread of infection. Preventive measures are not suggestions or options. They are mandatory steps anyone entering the building must follow.

# I. Prevention

## Social

*All efforts must be made to prevent contact and maintain space between people.*

- Canceled all events other than Mass
- Parish Office is closed to any visitors; staff remain at work
- Elderly and those at increased risk are highly encouraged to stay home (refer to CDC guidelines)
- Anyone who is ill or exposed to illness must stay away
- No handshakes or other forms of person-to-person contact
- No greeting of peace in Mass
- No holding of hands during Lord's Prayer
- Ushers are scrutinizing every parishioner for symptoms of illness. If parishioner appears ill, ushers will ask them to return home (with prayers and Mass guide)

# I. Prevention

## Environment

- Hand sanitizing stations at major entry/exit points and in all classrooms
- Sanitizing of all “common” surfaces twice a day and after use (supplies in every room)
- Sanitizing of tops of pews after every Mass
- Hygiene signage throughout Church
- Greeters are enforcing hand sanitizing
- Drinking fountains disabled
- Hygiene signage at entrances and in bathrooms
- Removal of children’s books & toys from Church foyer

# I. Prevention

## Sacramental/Liturgical

- Suspension of reception of communion by tongue
- Suspension of reception of Precious Blood
- Suspension of Holy Water at entrance to Church
- Removal of laminated Mass cards
  - Replaced with paper Mass cards
- Removal of hymnals from pews
- Collection baskets will not be passed
  - Ushers will hold baskets during Holy Communion in the aisles
- Reconciliation has been moved out of the Confessionals so 3' of space is maintained between priest and penitent.
- Anointing of the Sick will only be with blessing on forehead, not hands, and only for dire cases

## 2. Infection

As families are infected or required to self-quarantine, it will be important that St. Mark's maintains spiritual and social relations. To support multiple families that are stricken with illness or are socially isolated, "Care Teams" (CTs) are being formed to visit homes with very strict protocol to ensure the team members are not infected.

# St. Mark's Care Teams

## Overview

All Small Faith Communities and members of Ministries are being asked to volunteer to be trained as Care Teams (CTs). Each CT will be managed by a member of the parish staff. CTs will be assigned no more than seven households to visit. Each household that must stay away from St. Mark's will be visited once a week by the CT, with phone calls and emails in between visits.

# St. Mark's Care Teams

## Functions

- CTs will initiate contact with family via phone
- Date/time for visit scheduled
- No more than three CT members visit family
- Once a week, CTs will deliver:
  - Card from Fr. Ben
  - Comfort food
  - Casserole
  - Religious materials (prayer cards, rosaries, etc)
  - Holy Communion
- CTs will pray with family prior to ending visit
- Log of visit recorded and reported to parish staff

# St. Mark's Care Teams

## Protocols

- No one that is in a high risk category, as defined by the CDC, may join a CT (see CDC for details)
- No one who is ill or known to be exposed to the virus may participate
- No one under age 18 may participate
- CTs may not enter the house during visitation. All interaction will require three feet of separation
- The Care Team may not receive any materials or goods from the family being visited
- All containers for food delivered to the family must be disposable, one-time use, and disinfected prior to delivery (i.e. cans must be wiped with disinfectant)

### III. Social Disruption

Should a large group of parishioners (i.e. those over age 60) be required to stay away from the parish, CTs will not be able to “keep up” with the volume of families socially isolated. While the CTs will visit as many families as possible, the parish will need to rely on social media and remote video broadcast as tools of spiritual and social connectivity to its parishioners.

# Communications

Now more than ever, parishioners need to register with the parish (see the parish website for online registration form <https://www.stmarksboise.org/>).

Further, parishioners need to join Small Faith Communities or form new ones. Both of these efforts will be messaged consistently and persistently across all parish media of communication. Audrey Weiss, Director of Communication, will coordinate messaging.

# Communications

The staff, with volunteers, will conduct a “phone-a-thon blitz” in the week of March 15-21 to contact every registered household to gather accurate information and ensure connectivity. A log of contacts will be established and maintained.

# Communications

Under the guidance of the Director of Communications, Audrey Weiss, parish clergy and staff will “push out” social messaging in various forms through social media on a daily basis. Examples include:

- Website
  - Facebook
  - Instagram
  - Constant Contact (email)
  - Texting
  - Phone trees
  - Twitter
  - Mass (FB Live)
  - Prayers
  - Video Greeting from clergy
  - Greetings from parishioners
  - Announcements
  - Bulletins
  - Bible studies
  - Homilies
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# Financial Concerns

More than any other time, the parish truly needs parishioners to continue offertory giving uninterrupted. Our operations costs will continue, and will likely increase, not decrease, during the epidemic. Just as our parishioners need the Church, the Church needs its parishioners.

# Financial Concerns

If weekly offertory drops more than 20%, it will cause a financial crisis for the parish. Prevention of the crisis is two-pronged:

- Budget austerity
- Sustained campaign of “donor engagement”

# Financial Concerns

- The Director of Parish Operations has implemented anticipatory budget austerity.
  - All non-essential parish spending has been suspended.
  - Overpayment of the parish loan has been suspended.
  - The budget for FY 2021 has been reduced by 5% from FY 2020's discretionary spending.
  - Weekly offertory levels are being carefully monitored.

# Financial Concerns

- Sustained donor engagement includes:
  - Clear and concrete messaging from clergy regarding importance of financial support of parish
  - Campaign to transform “basket offertory” to electronic offertory through persistent messaging
    - Social media
    - Bulletin announcements
    - Letters
    - Constant Contact emails
  - Family quarterly statements of pledges that highlight any decreased offertory
  - Weekly reports to the parish through the bulletin of levels of parish offertory.

# Online Giving

The easiest and most reliable means for parishioners to continue financial support is to use either Electronic Funds Transfer from a bank account or pay by credit card via “We Share.” This can be set up by going to the parish website, clicking on “Donate” and then choosing “Donate Now.” For more information, contact Michaela Reitcheck at (208) 375-6651 or [mreitcheck@stmarksboise.org](mailto:mreitcheck@stmarksboise.org)

<https://stmarksboise.weshareonline.org/ws/opportunities/GeneralOffertory/setupRecurring>

## IV. Recovery

As soon as the “all clear” is sounded for the virus, the parish will need to move into recovery phase, which includes spiritual, social and financial efforts. We need to brainstorm what this looks like. Planning and implementation should be the work of the Parish Council, Finance Council, and Parish Staff over the next six months.

# Memorial Mass

If, unfortunately, parishioners die due to the epidemic, the Church will need to gather as one to grieve. While individual funerals will have been celebrated, we may need to celebrate a Memorial Mass. This should occur before any celebration or “rite of passage” beyond the epidemic.

# Festival of St. Mark's

To mark the new era of St. Mark's once the crisis ends, we may include a parish festival that incorporates a Mass of Thanksgiving, parish carnival and feast. The Parish Council is engaged in planning for the festival.

# Financial Recovery

The virus will cost the parish both financially and socially. A systematic evaluation of lost income and lost enrollments needs to be developed, with the results widely reported so parishioners know what financial recovery will need to look like. Like rebuilding a house after a tornado, parishioners will need to re-commit to their financial pledges. A parishioner registration drive to enroll new parishioners will be needed.