



**RICHARD FRANK STIKA
BY THE GRACE OF GOD AND FAVOR OF THE APOSTOLIC SEE
THIRD BISHOP OF KNOXVILLE**

D E C R E E

Whereas, the Diocese of Knoxville has been monitoring the directives, recommendations and guidelines of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Tennessee State and Local Health Departments to ensure that all diocesan parishes are responding appropriately to efforts to prevent the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19); and

Whereas, as responsible members of the community we have a duty towards the common good and the proportionate care and caution necessary to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 disease; and

Whereas, according to the CDC the COVID-19 virus spreads easily between people, especially when they gather; and

Whereas, gatherings are high-risk activities because of the prolonged time spent in the vicinity of the other participants and the increased likelihood of intermittent breaking of physical distancing; and

Whereas, across the nation, many clusters of COVID-19 cases have been traced back to workplace meetings and gatherings;

Through this decree, effective immediately, I hereby mandate the following directives (procedures) regarding meetings held on diocesan/parish property {Note - our pastors may contact my office and seek my permission to slightly amend these directives/procedures based upon their parish's unique, site-specific challenges}:

1. Prioritize, encourage and promote live-streaming, computer-based conferencing (Zoom) and tele-participation options as an alternative to in-person meeting participation. Out of respect for the safety of others, tele-participation options should be offered to all participants invited to meetings/gatherings, especially individuals who are higher-risk, who live with higher-risk individuals or who provide support to higher-risk individuals.
2. Meetings/Gatherings **must** maintain a maximum of no more than 50 people for the entire duration of the event. Large event venues can divide their event spaces into more than one event space. Simultaneous events must be unrelated and guests at each event cannot attend the other events.
3. In an effort to maintain consistency with our Public Mass procedures, meeting/gathering participants must wear cloth face coverings. If the meeting organizer can ensure that all participants

can consistently maintain physical distancing of 12 feet or more, the cloth face covering requirement may be dismissed.

4. Prior to the meeting/gathering, screen all meeting/gathering participants by asking the following questions:

- a) Have you been told to Quarantine/isolate by a medical provider or the health department?
- b) Have you had face-to-face contact for 10 or more minutes with someone who has COVID-19?
- c) Are you feeling ill and/or experiencing any of the symptoms of COVID-19?

While it is preferred that temperature checks with a no-touch thermometer be obtained before participants enter the meeting space it may not be practical – therefore – taking temperatures will be at the discretion of the pastor, diocesan director and the meeting coordinator.

5. All meeting/gathering attendees must sign an attendance roster. The meeting/gathering coordinator must retain this roster for 21 days.

6. At this point in time food/beverages may not be offered or served during the meeting or gathering.

7. Have hand sanitizer available at the entrance of the meeting/gathering space. Discourage participants from using equipment, including phones, desks, other work tools when possible. When not possible, hand sanitizer should be used both prior to use of communal items and immediately after. Routinely sanitize shared surfaces and equipment throughout the day and between users. Upon completion of the meeting/gathering, the meeting coordinator must ensure the cleaning and disinfecting of touched surfaces (i.e. pews, tables, doorknobs, light switches, handles, toilets, faucets, sinks) with household cleaners and EPA-registered disinfectants that are appropriate for these surfaces. Each meeting/gathering group must provide their own cleaners/disinfectants.

8. The attached form is available for use when organizing and scheduling a meeting/gathering. This form is optional and is to be used at the discretion of the pastor/diocesan director/meeting coordinator.

Given at the Chancery this 4th day of June in the Year of Our Lord 2020.



Most Reverend Richard F. Stika
Bishop of Knoxville

Deacon Sean K. Smith
Chancellor

Public Meeting/Gathering

Release Form

<u>Meeting/Gathering Location:</u>	<u>Meeting/Gathering Date and Duration:</u>	<u>Meeting/Gathering Coordinator:</u>

The 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) is an extremely contagious illness that has been declared a worldwide pandemic by the World Health Organization. As a result, federal, state and local governments and health agencies have recommended social distancing and have placed limitations on the congregation of groups of people. As a result of these recommendations, the diocese/parish has instituted policies and procedures to protect our clergy, parishioners and guests. As we begin to reopen our meeting spaces for meetings/gatherings we have established guidelines to protect everyone who chooses to be on our campus. The parish of _____, cannot guarantee that you or your family will not become infected with COVID-19. Therefore, we request that you acknowledge that participating in attending meetings/gatherings on campus does include an elevated risk.

RELEASE FORM

By signing this Release, the undersigned listed below, acknowledge the contagious nature of COVID-19 virus. I voluntarily assume the risk that my group and I may be exposed to or infected by the COVID-19 virus by participating in a meeting/gathering on our campus. I understand that such exposure or infection may result in personal injury, illness, permanent disability and death. I understand that the risk of becoming exposed to or infected by COVID-19 may result from the actions, omissions, or negligence of me and/or others, including, but not limited to, employees of our parish, volunteers and program participants and their families. I voluntarily agree to assume responsibility for my group's adherence to the guidelines given to me by the parish/diocese. On my behalf, I hereby release, covenant not to sue, discharge, and hold harmless the Diocese of Knoxville, the parish of _____, their respective employees, agents and representatives, from any and all liabilities, claims, actions, damages, costs or expenses of any kind arising out of or relating thereto.

Signature of Meeting/Gathering Coordinator:

PRINT NAME

SIGNATURE

Date: _____