

Nothing Can Separate Us From the Love of God

(Rom 8:39)

Guidance for a
Return to the Public Pastoral Life of the Church
in the Tuam Ecclesiastical Province

This is a living document and will be reviewed regularly based
on current public health advice

ARCHDIOCESE OF TUAM
DIOCESE OF ACHONRY
DIOCESE OF CLONFERT
DIOCESE OF ELPHIN
DIOCESE OF GALWAY
DIOCESE OF KILLALA

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INTRODUCTION

The restrictions we have experienced in recent weeks have separated us from one another in all sorts of ways but, as St. Paul assures us, “nothing can separate us from the love of God” (*Rom 8:39*). Many people, inspired by that love, have given of themselves in all kinds of service. We acknowledge the generosity and creativity with which our priests have continued to provide essential sacramental ministry in our parishes and our hospitals under difficult circumstances. In partnership with our lay staff and volunteers, they have been very proactive in providing spiritual and pastoral supports for parishioners online. On behalf of all our parishioners we thank them sincerely. Much of what we have learnt over the past three months will continue to have value in the future, in terms of improving the quality of the pastoral care that we offer to parishioners who, for one reason or another, are unable to participate physically in the gatherings of the faith community.

It is clear that the COVID-19 Virus will remain present at some level in the community for the foreseeable future. Just as human behaviour has been very successful in reducing the level of community contagion, human behaviour will also determine what happens in the weeks and months ahead. All the evidence of recent weeks has been that the most important factors in reducing the spread of the infection have been the adherence to physical distancing and hand hygiene. The guidance which we are providing in the following pages is in continuity with our regular communications since the pandemic began. It has been prepared in consultation with a variety of experts in health and safety, epidemiology, nursing management, risk management and human resources management, to whom we are most grateful for their assistance. In considering the requirements of public health and the common good, we are particularly conscious of the needs of the faithful, including clergy and lay ministers, who are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 infection, but who also risk the damaging effects of physical and social isolation. If properly and sensitively implemented and carefully managed, we believe that these measures will help all of us to re-engage with the public life of the Church with confidence, energy and joy. We recognise that some of our parishioners may feel that they would be better advised to stay at home for the time being and we look forward to supporting their continued participation online or on parish radio.

This Guidance document, *Nothing Can Separate Us from the Love of God*, incorporates the principles expressed in the *Framework Document for a Return to the Public Celebration of Mass and the Sacraments* published by the Irish Episcopal Conference.

We hope that many in our parish communities will be inspired to respond with generosity and energy in helping to renew and strengthen the four pillars of parish life: worship, word, community and outreach to those in need.

+ Michael Neary,
Archbishop of Tuam

+ Brendan Kelly,
Bishop of Galway

+ John Fleming,
Bishop of Killala

+ Kevin Doran,
Bishop of Elphin

+ Michael Duignan,
Bishop of Clonfert

Dermot Meehan,
Diocesan Administrator of Achonry

OVERVIEW

Church personnel should, at all times, follow the most up-to-date public health advice and associated regulations and obligations, particularly in regard to limitations on gatherings, the requirements of social (physical) distancing, hygiene and sanitation measures and the use of personal protective equipment as appropriate. To reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19, public health advice emphasises the importance of strict adherence to physical distancing, good hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette and regular cleaning and sanitising of shared spaces.

It is most important that people who are unwell - and especially those with any symptoms that might suggest COVID-19 infection - **should stay at home** and, if possible, participate, as now, on webcam or radio.

INITIAL STEPS

1. Establish, in consultation with your Parish Pastoral Council, a support team of parishioners and staff, who would be able to implement the Diocesan plan in the particular circumstances of your parish. **(see Resource 1)**
2. The *Return to Work Safely Protocol*¹ is a statutory requirement and applies to all parishes. Part of the role of your support team will be to ensure that suitable training, in accordance with the Protocol, will be provided for sacristans, liturgical ministers, stewards, and cleaning volunteers etc. **(See Resource 3)**
3. A Risk Assessment of your Church and Sacristy should be carried out. **(See Resource 2)**
4. Devise a plan, applicable to each Church, to allow for safe queuing prior to entry, movement of people within the church and the distribution of Holy Communion in a safe manner for all. Arrange for appropriate signage which clearly indicates how this will work. Similar provisions will apply to other Church venues (halls, meeting rooms etc.) where people gather.
5. Identify how people with a physical disability will be facilitated (possibly accompanied by a carer or support person), so as to protect their personal space and ensure their optimum participation.
6. In a parish which has a number of Churches, consider whether it might be more effective, in terms of facilitating numbers and maintaining hygiene, to celebrate Mass in the largest Church for the foreseeable future, rather than using each Church every weekend. This is a matter for local decision. There should be no multiplication of Masses.
7. Plan to have one or more supervised boxes at the entrances of the Church for contribution envelopes/cash offerings to avoid the need for people to pass collection baskets or bags.
8. Install dispensers for sanitising gel at entrances, the sanctuary, as well as in toilet facilities and sacristies. Aim, where possible, to avoid pinch-points.
9. The cleaning of the Church, including toilet facilities, will need to take place after Mass and any other public gathering. **(See Resource 4)**

1. See <https://dbei.gov.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/Return-to-Work-Safely-Protocol.pdf>

10. Parishes need to be cognisant of the possibility of a Church-associated outbreak of COVID-19 and to respond in a timely manner. **(See Resource 11)**
 11. The public celebration of the Eucharist in any Church will be authorised only if the elements of the Diocesan plan are demonstrably in place. A church readiness form should be signed by the Parish Priest/Adm and returned to the Diocesan Bishop/Administrator. **(See Resource 12)**
 12. Your Allianz Policy will cover your activities provided you have taken reasonable precautions to protect against what is now a known threat. See Allianz briefing *Risk Management Guidelines For Re-Opening Churches And Ancillary Buildings* and corresponding FAQs (June 2020).
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OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

1. In the event that outdoor liturgies are considered appropriate, these must be celebrated with due regard for liturgical norms and for the guidance relating to physical distancing and hygiene provided elsewhere in this document, and in consultation with civil authorities as required.
 2. The public blessing of graves should not take place this year as a communal celebration. The priest(s) could arrange to bless the graves privately.
 3. Some may choose to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation outdoors, while taking into account the requirements of physical distancing, hygiene and the integrity of the Sacrament.
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RESPONSIBILITY TO PARISH STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

1. Churches and other parish buildings are also places of work. This guidance document for the Return to Public Pastoral Life must be read in conjunction with the *Return to Work Safely Protocol*.
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COCOONING

1. Many parish volunteers, lay ministers, priests and religious are included among those who have been cocooning. The Department of Health strongly recommends that people who are over 70 or have a condition which makes them extremely medically vulnerable should stay at home as much as possible. This is difficult.
2. Cocooning volunteers or lay ministers should be sensitively invited, having carefully weighed the risks and benefits, to give an indication as to whether they choose to stay at home or to continue in their public ministry, in which case they should be advised to be cautious and prudent in respect of the activities in which they engage.

PLANNING A RETURN TO THE PUBLIC CELEBRATION OF THE EUCHARIST

YOUR CONGREGATION

1. The dispensation from the Sunday and Holyday obligation is extended for the time being.
 2. Determine the number of available or “open” pews/benches you can have in the Church for any Mass and in turn calculate how many you may be able to facilitate at each Mass, keeping in mind that members of one household can sit together.
 3. It would be preferable to manage expectations in advance, rather than to be turning people away. People from particular town lands, station areas or housing estates could come to a designated Mass on a particular day, in such a way that everyone can come at least once every few weeks on Sunday. Spread participation across the full week. Take into account the potential impact on capacity of memorial Masses, anniversary Masses etc. Devise a plan that best suits your parish.
 4. Each parish needs to consider an appropriate communications strategy. **(See Resource 8)**
 5. Hymnals and missals normally made available in the Church should not be used for the foreseeable future due to contamination concerns. Missalettes may be made available for single use only (then taken home or binned).
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LITURGICAL GUIDELINES

1. Access to the Sacristy should be limited to the sacristan, the celebrant and deacon or concelebrating clergy. A maximum capacity for the Sacristy should be determined and indicated. Booking of Masses etc should be done by telephone or email.
 2. A Simple Entrance and Recessional, rather than a procession through the Church, is recommended at this time.
 3. Concelebration should be limited, and concelebrants should receive Holy Communion under both species using separate chalices or by intinction.
 4. Deacons should continue to proclaim the Gospel and give the Homily, but caution should be exercised regarding ministering at the altar for the time being.
 5. The sanctuary area should be arranged in such a way that those who have a liturgical role can exercise that role while respecting the required physical distance.
 6. The priest celebrant and other ministers should not wear masks or gloves while in the sanctuary but should simply remain at the required physical distance from the congregation and each other during the entirety of the Mass. The priest/minister should wear protective face-covering for the distribution of Holy Communion.
 7. Rather than an Offertory Procession, the gifts of bread and wine should be brought by the celebrant from a credence table, placed near the altar, which will also hold the water bowl and finger towel.
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8. If hosts for the communion of the faithful are to be consecrated, they could be placed on a second corporal towards the side of the altar, in order to avoid the possibility of contamination. It is good practice to consecrate at each Mass a sufficient number of hosts for that celebration only.
 9. At this time, the optional exchange of the Sign of Peace can be omitted or offered in a manner which avoids any physical contact.
 10. The rite of blessing and sprinkling of water and the distribution of blessed water is suspended for the time being.
 11. Care should be taken to thoroughly clean all vessels and to change purificators and finger towels after each Mass.
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ALTAR SERVERS, MINISTERS, CHOIRS & MUSICIANS

1. If there are altar servers, their role will be limited and there should be no more than two. Altar servers should vest in a supervised designated space outside the sacristy, adhering to physical distancing and safeguarding norms. Each server should use a gown/alb allocated specifically to him/her.
 2. Ministers of Holy Communion, Readers and Musicians/Cantors should take their designated seats before Mass begins. Perhaps there should be only one reader and he/she should, if possible, read from a separate microphone / lectern to the priest/deacon.
 3. Some music should be provided, even if it is limited. In the interests of physical distancing, parishes may wish, for the time being, to limit music ministry to a cantor and an instrumentalist.
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DISTRIBUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION

1. For the time being, it is recommended that Holy Communion should not be given under both species and should only be received on the hand.
2. Priests and Ministers of Holy Communion should visibly sanitise their hands both before and after the distribution of Holy Communion. They should wear protective face-covering for the distribution of Holy Communion, even if a screen is in use. Perhaps a small table could be appropriately positioned to allow the priest/minister to re-sanitise their hands if, for example, they make contact with the hands of the communicant, during the distribution of Holy Communion.
3. Parishes should review their arrangements to provide for the needs of people with a gluten intolerance.
4. Determine with your parish support team how best to distribute Holy Communion, taking into account the layout of the church and keeping in mind that by minimising the movement and crossing over of people, we also minimise the risk of spreading the virus.

THE CELEBRATION OF BAPTISM

1. Arrangements for Baptism should take account of the layout of the Church in order to ensure that physical distancing can be maintained. Arrangements should be discussed with the families in advance, if it is proposed to Baptise more than one child in the same ceremony.
 2. The wearing of a face covering by the celebrant is recommended when physical distancing cannot be observed.
 3. The celebrant will sign the child with the Cross without touching.
 4. The anointing with the Holy Oils will be administered by the use of cotton buds.
 5. A jug of fresh water will be blessed for the Baptism. If there are a number of Baptisms in sequence, the same jug of Blessed Water could be used, but water may not be re-used from the font or basin.
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THE CELEBRATION OF RECONCILIATION

1. The Sacrament of Reconciliation must be celebrated while respecting both the required physical distance and the integrity of the Sacrament and the privacy of the penitent.
 2. For the foreseeable future it will not be possible to safely celebrate the Sacrament in the normal way in the Confessional.
 3. Provision should be made in the body of the Church, possibly in one of the transepts, for a confessional area, which includes:
 - a. a space for celebration, with two seats and a Perspex/plexiglass screen, designed to allow communication
 - b. a waiting area which provides both for the confidentiality of the celebration and for the required physical distance of those waiting
 4. For safeguarding reasons, the confessional area, should not be closed to view from the body of the Church.
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THE CELEBRATION OF FIRST CONFESSION, FIRST COMMUNION & CONFIRMATION

1. Arrangements for all of these Sacraments presumes that catechesis has been completed. The timing, modality and practicality of this will need to be discussed with parents and teachers.
2. Arrangements for the celebration of these Sacraments will take into account the liturgical guidance and the guidance relating to physical distancing and hygiene as outlined elsewhere in this document.

THE CELEBRATION OF MARRIAGE

1. Arrangements for the celebration of Marriage will take into account the liturgical guidance and the guidance relating to physical distancing and hygiene as outlined elsewhere in this document.
 2. At the time of booking, the new capacity of the Church should be discussed with the couple.
 3. Advise the couple that group photographs in the church and grounds and the greeting of guests at the exit may not be possible due to physical distancing requirements.
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THE CELEBRATION OF CHRISTIAN FUNERALS

1. Arrangements for the celebration of Funerals will take into account the liturgical guidance and the guidance relating to physical distancing and hygiene as outlined elsewhere in this document.
 2. The offering of condolences in the Church should remain suspended.
 3. Maintaining physical distance is just as important, but in some ways more challenging, at the cemetery.
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THE PASTORAL CARE OF THE SICK AND THE HOUSE-BOUND

1. The anointing of the sick will be celebrated, when pastoral need indicates, without direct physical contact (i.e. using a cotton bud or surgical glove).
2. First Friday visits may be resumed in accordance with public health guidelines. Priests and Ministers need to be particularly conscious of managing this in a way which minimises the risk of bringing any infection from one household to another.
3. Some elderly or medically vulnerable parishioners may still prefer not to have a pastoral visit for the foreseeable future. In that case priests are encouraged to make contact and perhaps pray with parishioners by phone.
4. Even in the presumed absence of COVID-19, priests should take careful measures to sanitise before and afterwards and use PPE. **(See Resource 5)**
5. If the presence of COVID-19 is suspected, PPE will be required, and advice should be sought. **(See Resource 5)**

REVIEW

This guidance is not exhaustive and will be kept under review. It will be amenable to development and refinement as circumstances change, taking into account both the light of experience and future advice and directives from government and public health authorities.

CONCLUSION

The experience of the pandemic has called upon us, in recent weeks, to live the reality of Church in a new way. For many in our parish communities there has been the pain of bereavement and of separation from loved ones. While some have faced personal risk in their service of the community, others have been challenged by the reality of temporary unemployment or the need to care for children without the usual supports.

As we prepare to gather again for the Eucharist and for the Sacraments and to resume the pastoral life of the Church our twofold objective is:

1. to provide the opportunity for people to be strengthened, renewed and inspired by the mystery of God's love for us
2. to express that love in our own care for one another

The guidance above, and the more detailed resources which you will find in the following pages are intended to help each parish community to put flesh on that love and that care in the daily reality of our life as Church.

RESOURCE 1: PARISH SUPPORT TEAM AND VOLUNTEER ROLES

FORMING YOUR PARISH SUPPORT TEAM

It would be helpful if your Parish Support Team members had expertise in areas such as Communications, Medical/Nursing, Health and Safety, Project Management, Stewarding, Human Resources etc.

In addition to asking people with the above expertise, you may wish to consider including your Parish Secretary, Parish Safeguarding Representative, Sacristan(s), and a worker/workplace representative (if not already included in the above list) on your Parish Support Team.

Note that in *the Return to Work Safely Protocol* you are required to appoint a worker/workplace representative.

Volunteers will be required for the following areas:

- ✓ Stewarding - parishioners who would have the personal skills to serve as stewards
- ✓ Cleaning - parishioners who would be willing and able to ensure that hygiene standards are met
- ✓ Training – someone who can facilitate training of all volunteers
- ✓ Ministry Rotas – someone to take charge of rota of readers, eucharistic ministers etc

It may be helpful to have one or two people designated as Volunteer Coordinators – who will ensure that each volunteer is registered correctly, has completed training, and knows what their role entails.

RESOURCE 2: RISK ASSESSMENT

1. INTRODUCTION

This procedure outlining the risk and the mitigation requirements for the return to Public Pastoral Life of the Church is based on material issued by the World Health Organisation (WHO)², and the *Return to Work Safely Protocol*.³ The procedure is concerned primarily with the risk posed by the virus in an indoor setting. While it is currently not possible to eliminate the risk of exposure to the virus, the risk of the COVID-19 virus being transmitted should be sufficiently controlled by completing the actions outlined in the risk assessment checklist.

2. RISK ASSESSMENT

The Coronavirus is spread in minute water droplets that are expelled from the body through sneezing, coughing, talking, singing, or breathing. It can survive for a period on surfaces, from where it can be transferred to others through touch. While for the vast majority symptoms will be mild, outcomes for some from contracting the virus can be so severe it is regarded as a high-risk hazard. The impact of the virus in the Church environment can be moderated by:

- ✓ reducing the level and duration of exposure
- ✓ ensuring the required physical distancing between household groups and individuals
- ✓ practising strict hygiene protocols
- ✓ suggesting that people who are at high risk from the virus should remain at home and continue to access liturgies online or on radio
- ✓ reminding people who are displaying symptoms or who are close contacts of those who have the virus to stay at home, from where they can continue to access liturgies online or on radio
- ✓ Managing movement within the Church building and on the Church grounds
- ✓ Ensuring all clergy, staff, volunteers, and contractors are aware of the administrative controls to be followed.

3. MITIGATION CONTROLS CHECKLIST

The implementation of mitigation measures are designed to control the risk that the gathering will facilitate COVID-19 virus transmission. Before completing the checklist, it would be useful to collect the following information in advance:

- ✓ who is doing what and how?
- ✓ where they are doing it; and
- ✓ what are they using to carry out the task?
- ✓ what is the current capacity of the building and how will this be reduced?
- ✓ does the space outside and around the Church building allow sufficient space for queuing and managing physical distancing, should the reduction of indoor capacity lead to large numbers requiring the ceremonies to be relayed outside the building?

4. FACILITATING CONTACT TRACING

The *Return To Work Safely Protocol* advocates that the employer has a register to allow the tracing of contacts of an employee presenting with COVID-19 symptoms. It is advisable to have a mechanism in place which allows for this process for clergy, staff, volunteers, and contractors etc. The register should be kept in compliance with the principles of GDPR.

2. Mass Gatherings in the context of COVID-19. <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/mass-gathering-risk-assessment-COVID-19-key-considerations>

3. Government of Ireland: COVID-19 Specific National Protocol for Employers and Workers (Return to Work Safely Protocol) <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/22829a-return-to-work-safely-protocol/>

KEY CONSIDERATIONS – MITIGATION (RISK REDUCTION) CHECKLIST

A	Understanding of the COVID-19 situation / Public Health Advice	Done
	Have you established your Parish Support Team	
	Are Parish Personnel and the Parish Support Team informed on the most up to date COVID-19 outbreak guidance available and committed to following the available guidance. See www.hse.ie	
	Do Parish Personnel and the Parish Support Team understand the COVID-19 risks and transmission routes, the steps that Church attendees can take to limit spread, and the recognised best practices (respiratory etiquette, hand hygiene, physical distancing, sanitation practices etc.)	
	Are Parish Personnel and the Parish Support Team aware of the meaning of the following measures: quarantine, self-isolation and self-monitoring? www.hse.ie	
B	Staff, Volunteers, Partners and Stakeholders	Done
	Have the number of stewards required been determined, recruited and trained	
	Has a team of volunteer cleaners been recruited and trained	
	Has the Parish Health and Safety Plan been updated to take account of public health crisis	
	Have you created a contact tracing log (e.g., kept duty rotas on file) for staff and volunteers	
	Have you given consideration to the requirements that may arise in relation to the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults	
C	Response & Implementation	Done
	Have the following supplies been acquired: ✓ PPE (masks, gloves, aprons etc) for Parish Personnel and Volunteers ✓ Hand sanitiser, tissues, frequently replaced soap canisters for toilets/bathrooms ✓ Hand sanitiser units for appropriate points in the church	
	Has advice or material for the disinfection of Audio Systems after use been given	
	Has it been established that doors can be propped open while avoiding trip hazards	
	Have the required number of pews/benches to be blocked off been identified	
	Have you made an assessment of the new capacity of the Church	
	Have you considered how the limited capacity will be communicated to the parishioners	
	Has a space been allocated for parishioners with disabilities and their carers	
	Is there a management plan for access to and movement in the sacristy and sanctuary area	

		Done
	<p>Has a plan been developed to manage risks related to the sacristy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Sanitising of liturgical vessels ✓ Avoidance of contamination of altar breads, cruets etc. ✓ Use of same vestments by more than one priest ✓ Sanitising of hand basin etc. 	
	Has a mechanism been agreed for providing everyone with an opportunity to come to Mass while ensuring smaller congregations.	
	Has a cleaning schedule been developed, for the church, sacristy and toilet facilities etc.	
	Is there an agreed safe method in place for the distribution of Holy Communion	
	Is there a plan for a secure means for receiving contributions without the need to pass bags or baskets	
	Have you factored in physical distancing and hygiene measures in your arrangements for counting cash	
	Is there a stewarding plan in place	
	Has an area suitable for the Sacrament of Reconciliation been identified and modified	

D	Command, control, and coordination arrangements	Done
	Is it clear who is responsible for decisions and actions to modify, restrict, postpone or cancel the liturgy in the event of a COVID-19 outbreak	
	Is there a plan for the safety of staff members/volunteers, which is consistent with the <i>Return To Work Safely Protocol</i>	
	Is it clear who is responsible for ensuring compliance with the safety plan	

E	Communications	Done
	Has a plan been prepared for communicating new arrangements and potential risks to parishioners	
	Is there a person(s) tasked with managing communications	
	Has signage regarding physical distancing and the movement of people been prepared or sourced	
	Are badges / sashes / hi-vis jackets for staff and volunteers available to be distributed where required	

F	Surge capacity	Done
	Are there arrangements in place in the event that a greater number of people arrives than can be safely accommodated	
	Are there arrangements in place to call on extra stewards to be available at short notice	
	Has a safe area outside the Church been designated to accommodate surge capacity - mark out areas for physical distancing	

RESOURCE 3: TRAINING

TRAINING FRAMEWORK OVERVIEW

The training of parish clergy, staff and volunteers is an indispensable part of the Return to Public *Pastoral Life of the Church* document, (*The Document*). The following resource should be read in conjunction with *The Document* and gives a high-level overview for each parish of:

1. Who should be trained;
2. What training modules are available;
3. How the training could be delivered.

1. Who Should Be Trained

The following personnel categories have been clearly identified in *The Document* as having a key role:

- ✓ Clergy; staff members, including volunteers e.g. parish support team, parish secretaries; sacristans; liturgical ministers; stewards; cleaning volunteers; ministers of Holy Communion; communications officer(s).

Each role will require specific training depending on the function(s) and responsibilities being undertaken. While some training will merely point to the relevant piece/protocol/checklist in *The Document*, other parts will be contained in distinct training modules which will be made available. (see below *How The Training May Be Delivered*).

2. What Training Modules Are Available

Short training modules will be made available to parishes in a user-friendly format, for example:

- ✓ Hand Hygiene, Respiratory Etiquette and Physical Distancing;
- ✓ Safe and effective use of PPE;
- ✓ Responding to an outbreak of COVID-19 in parish;
- ✓ Role specific training modules for each personnel category listed above;
- ✓ Communications

3. How The Training May Be Delivered

The purpose of training is to ensure that each category of personnel identified in this document is in a position to safely and competently carry out their role in the context of COVID-19 restrictions. The content for each training module detailed above will be made available to parishes in a variety of formats, from your own Diocesan office, as follows:

- ✓ Each module content will be made available in **Word** and **PDF Briefing Sheets** which can be printed, emailed and distributed as appropriate;
- ✓ Some modules will also be made available in **PowerPoint** format which may be used by each diocese to train individuals or multiple people at a given time either via *Self-Directed Training* or via *Webinar*;
- ✓ Some modules will also be made available in **Video Format** which may be used by each diocese to train individuals or multiple people at a given time either via *Self-Directed Training* or via *Webinar*;

RESOURCE 4: CLEANING

EFFECTIVE CLEANING AND DECONTAMINATION

Always keep up to date with the latest public health advice and adjust your cleaning procedures in line with that advice. It is essential that you read Resource 5 (Use of PPE) in conjunction with this resource.

Surfaces do not just need to be cleaned, they also need to be disinfected / decontaminated. Due to the potential survival of the SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) virus in the environment for several days, the premises and areas potentially contaminated should be cleaned and disinfected before their re-use, using products containing antimicrobial agents known to be effective against coronaviruses.

DISINFECTION / DECONTAMINATION

Due to the relatively recent appearance of the SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) virus, there is no exhaustive overview of the disinfectant (Biocidal) products which may be effective against the virus. Any information provided here should be checked against information which is constantly being updated on the websites of the ECDC and the EPA.⁴

To avoid damage, the decontamination of equipment should always be carried out in accordance with the equipment manufacturer's instructions.

TIMING AND CLEANING TIPS

- ✓ Ideally, the area should be left for 1 hour after the last person leaves before cleaning begins. This will reduce the virus load by about 75%. If cleaning is done too early, virus that is in the air (disturbed by the movement of people leaving) will settle on areas after you have cleaned them defeating the purpose.
- ✓ Cleaning with warm water and household detergents (warm soapy water) and use of common disinfectant products should be sufficient for general precautionary cleaning.
- ✓ Diluted household bleach is suggested for decontamination purposes. (Standard household bleach has an initial concentration of approx. 5% of sodium hypochlorite and can be diluted using 50 measures of water to 1 measure of bleach).
- ✓ For surfaces that could be damaged by household bleach, 70% concentration of ethanol (found in some fluid or gel preparations and in some wipes) is needed for decontamination after cleaning with a neutral detergent.
- ✓ When other chemical products are used, the manufacturer's recommendation should be followed and the products prepared and applied according to them.
- ✓ Use a bottle plus a microfiber cloth, disposable paper towel, or disinfectant-saturated wipe to apply the disinfectant. Avoid creating splashes and spray when cleaning if possible.
- ✓ Disinfectants need time to kill germs. You should actively rub the disinfectant into the surface, so that all parts of it (including scratches and dents) get wet. The same is true for the rinsing process.
- ✓ Put a system in place for the disposal of cleaning cloths and used wipes in a no-touch bin containing a rubbish bag which overhangs the edge of the bin. Current HSE guidance recommends waste such as cleaning waste, tissues etc. from a person suspected of having COVID-19 should be double bagged and stored in a secure area for 72 hours before being presented for general waste collection.
- ✓ Ensure that items such as buckets are emptied and cleaned with a fresh solution of disinfectant before re-use.

PERSONAL SAFETY

You must use the appropriate PPE. A risk assessment must be undertaken to determine the protective clothing required. For most tasks gloves and aprons are sufficient. If there is the potential of splash to the mouth, eyes or nose, face-protection such as a mask and visor or goggles must be worn. **(See Resource 5)**

- ✓ Non-single use PPE should be decontaminated using the available products (e.g. diluted household bleach as above or 70% ethanol).
- ✓ When using chemical products for cleaning, it is important to keep the facility ventilated (e.g. by opening the windows) in order to protect the health of cleaning personnel.

ITEMS REQUIRED

- ✓ Appropriate PPE for the cleaning team **(See Resource 5)**
- ✓ The use of disposable or dedicated cleaning equipment is recommended
- ✓ Cleaning and Disinfecting products
- ✓ No-touch bins, if possible
- ✓ For offices - provide workers with cleaning materials such as disinfectant or wipes to keep their own workspace clean

AREAS TO BE CLEANED AND DISINFECTED

A cleaning schedule for each area should be drawn up and a daily cleaning checklist should be kept for recording purposes. Depending on the location, frequently touched areas to be cleaned include:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| ✓ Porch and Entrance Areas | ✓ Table-tops and desks |
| ✓ Pews/Benches | ✓ Toilets and toilet doors, taps |
| ✓ Door handles and Doorknobs | ✓ Windowsills or ledges |
| ✓ Shrine/candle areas | ✓ Stairways and bannisters |
| ✓ Base of statues and pictures | ✓ Lifts |
| ✓ Light switches | ✓ Bins |
| ✓ Microphones | ✓ Telephones |
| ✓ Ambo/Lectern | ✓ Computer keyboard and mouse |
| ✓ Tabernacle door and key | ✓ Touchscreen tablets |
| ✓ Sanctuary Area | ✓ Kitchen appliances |
| ✓ Baptistry and Font | ✓ Kitchen surfaces and cupboard handles |

4. Currently, for most disinfectant products available in the European Union market for SARS-CoV-2 disinfection, the transitional measures of the BPR apply, as set out in Article 89 [7]. This means that most disinfectants are placed on the market subject to national legislation until the evaluation of the contained active substance(s) is finalised in the EU review programme. ECDC Disinfection of environments in healthcare and nonhealthcare settings potentially contaminated with SARS-CoV-2
https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/Environmental-persistence-of-SARS_CoV_2-virus-Options-for-cleaning2020-03-26_0.pdf

RESOURCE 5: USE OF PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

SAFE AND EFFECTIVE USE OF PPE – CHURCH CLEANING

PPE is used to help protect the wearer and to help reduce the rate of infection transmission. PPE can give a false sense of security. PPE must work properly and fit properly

THE PPE YOU NEED

For precautionary everyday cleaning in a Church environment you would need

- ✓ Plastic Aprons
- ✓ Gloves (non-sterile Nitrile gloves)
- ✓ Eye protection

If contamination is considered likely, a higher specification of PPE is recommended

- ✓ Filtering face pieces (FFP) respirators class 2 or 3 (FFP2 or FFP3)
- ✓ Goggles or face shield
- ✓ Disposable long-sleeved water-resistant gown
- ✓ Disposable gloves.

HOW TO USE PPE (THE SEQUENCE HERE IS IMPORTANT)

1. Make sure to plan your time well – be hydrated and have a toilet break before putting on PPE
2. Wash hands for at least 20 seconds
3. Put on your plastic apron, or long-sleeved gown if required, making sure it is tied securely at the back
4. Put on eye protection face-shield / goggles if required
5. Put on mask if required
6. Put on nonsterile nitrile gloves
7. You are now ready to enter the area to be cleaned

HOW TO REMOVE AND DISPOSE OF PPE (THE SEQUENCE HERE IS IMPORTANT)

1. To remove gloves grasp the outside of the cuff of the glove and peel off, holding the first glove in the other still gloved hand, insert the finger underneath – i.e. into the second glove - and peel off second glove and put in bin
2. Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds
3. Snap or unfasten the neck ties and allow to fall forward. Snap waist ties and fold apron in on itself, do not touch the outside as it is contaminated, and put into bin
4. Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds
5. Remove eye protection (Put in bin or designated area for cleaning for re-use)
6. Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds

The bin for gloves and aprons should be lined with a plastic bag which comes over the top edge and down the outside of the bin. The bag should be removed by putting fingers under edge of bag – i.e. between bag and outside of bin – and remove without touching inside of the bag and tied then placed inside a second bag which is also tied. This bag should be stored in a designated area for 72 hours and then can go in domestic bin.

SAFE AND EFFECTIVE USE OF PPE – IN THE LITURGY AND FOR HOME VISITS

PPE is used to help protect the wearer and to help reduce the rate of infection transmission. PPE can give a false sense of security. PPE must work properly and fit properly.

THE PPE YOU NEED

For the distribution of Holy Communion at Mass

- ✓ Face covering

For the celebration of Baptism

- ✓ Face covering
- ✓ Cotton buds

For pastoral visits to a home environment you would need

- ✓ Surgical Mask(s)
- ✓ Cotton buds (if celebrating anointing)

OR, if contamination is considered likely, a higher specification of PPE is required

- ✓ Filtering face pieces (FFP) respirators class 2 or 3 (FFP2 or FFP3)
- ✓ Goggles or face shield
- ✓ Disposable long-sleeved water-resistant gown
- ✓ Disposable gloves

HOW TO USE PPE (THE SEQUENCE HERE IS IMPORTANT)

1. Make sure to plan your time well – be hydrated and have a toilet break before putting on PPE
2. Wash hands for at least 20 seconds
3. Put on your plastic apron, making sure it is tied securely at the back.
4. Put on your surgical face mask. For mask with ties – tie the upper straps on top of head and bring the lower straps up in front of the ears and tie on top of head – mouth and nose should be fully covered. For mask with loops make sure the mask is extended to cover your mouth and chin.
5. Put on your eye protection if there is a risk of splashing (if the person you are going to see is coughing).
6. Put on nonsterile nitrile gloves.
7. You are now ready to enter the home / room area to be visited.

HOW TO REMOVE AND DISPOSE OF PPE (THE SEQUENCE HERE IS IMPORTANT)

1. To remove gloves grasp the outside of the cuff of the glove and peel off, holding the first glove in the other still gloved hand, insert the finger underneath – i.e. into the second glove – and peel off second glove and put in bin
2. Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds
3. Remove goggles / shield. Put in bin or designated area for cleaning for re-use
4. Snap or unfasten the neck ties and allow to fall forward. Snap waist ties and fold apron in on itself, do not touch the outside as it is contaminated, and put into bin
5. Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds
6. Once outside the room remove surgical facemask and put in bin
7. Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds

The bin for gloves & aprons should be lined with a plastic bag which comes over the top edge and down the outside of the bin. The bag should be removed by putting fingers under edge of bag – i.e. between bag and outside of bin – and remove without touching inside of the bag and tied then placed inside a second bag which is also tied. This bag should be stored in a designated area for 72 hours and then can go in domestic bin.

RESOURCE 6: STEWARDING

1. THE ROLE OF THE STEWARD

The objective is to provide a safe and secure environment in your given area. Be familiar with the methods of queuing, zone management, capacity monitoring and the maintenance of the physical distancing required to ensure a safe and secure environment. Ensuring the controls in place to prevent the transmission of the COVID-19 virus to those in attendance at liturgies are always maintained. These goals will be most effectively achieved with patience and courtesy.

2. THE STEWARDS FUNCTIONS AT LITURGIES

The steward will be trained to undertake the following tasks to prevent the transmission of the virus and ensure the safety of the congregation and all in attendance at liturgies. The functions of the steward include:

- ✓ Assist with the zoning of the Church building into sectors which are easily accessible from the building doorways to ensure minimum movement within the Church building
- ✓ Direct the movement of the congregation to designated zones and seating arrangements in such a way that crossover or “pinch points” are kept to a minimum
- ✓ Make a particular point of facilitating families with small children in buggies / prams
- ✓ Make a particular point of facilitating people with disabilities
- ✓ Monitor and restrict the numbers arriving to enter the building to ensure physical distancing is maintained in seated and standing areas
- ✓ Assist with the installation of tape/rope and signage to facilitate physical distancing in seating areas
- ✓ Assist with the formation of designated household seating to ensure the optimum space available is utilised
- ✓ Direct the congregation for the distribution of Holy Communion and where required during the liturgy
- ✓ Organise queues with physical distancing at entrances, exits and at sanitising points
- ✓ Be present as required outside the church building to manage car parking and surge capacity

3. KEY ACCOUNTABILITIES

Stewards need to be easily identifiable and will be provided with identification, ranging from HI-Vis Jackets to Badges or Sashes. The steward team will be accountable to a stewarding coordinator who will organise their schedule and positions at each liturgy. Each steward is expected to:

- ✓ Arrive at an agreed time in advance of the liturgy and register on arrival
- ✓ Always wear identification while on duty
- ✓ Attend training and be familiar with the role of the steward and the risks posed by the virus
- ✓ Remain in position until the congregation has left the church grounds and move people on as required
- ✓ Ensure all in attendance are following physical distancing guidelines
- ✓ Identify and resolve any problem in a courteous and polite manner
- ✓ In the event of an accident/incident involving a member of the congregation ensure the stewarding coordinator is immediately informed with accurate and easily understood information
- ✓ Ensure that members of the congregation remain in their designated places
- ✓ Ensure all entry and exit routes are kept clear of obstructions
- ✓ Monitor your area to resolve breaches of physical distancing protocols in a timely fashion
- ✓ Move people along to discourage the attendees from causing obstructions
- ✓ Ensure that you comply with regulations and policies for public safety and safe working
- ✓ Keep doors always open to ensure adequate ventilation (subject to external temperature)

RESOURCE 7: DISTRIBUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION - OPTIONS

The distribution of Holy Communion is the point at which Physical Distance is more challenging, both because of the movement of the congregation and the proximity, even if only for a moment, between the priest / minister and the communicant.

Holy Communion can be distributed quite safely as long as hand hygiene is observed, close contact is limited and the celebrant / minister wears a face covering.

Every effort should be made to maintain the sacredness of the Sacramental moment. Taking into account the specific layout of individual Churches, the following options are recommended:

Option 1: Communion by Approaching the Altar

- a. Each priest/minister wears a face covering following the correct protocols. A perspex/plexi-glass screen, with an opening at hand level may also be placed at all Communion distribution points.
- b. People approach in single file, by seat row, and maintaining physical distance.
- c. Arrange for people to return to their places by an alternative route.

Option 2: Communion Brought to People in their Seats

- a. Holy Communion will be distributed to people in their seats.
- b. Priest/Minister wears face covering and makes their way through their assigned section.

RESOURCE 8: COMMUNICATIONS AND SIGNAGE

IDENTIFY THE GROUPS OF PEOPLE YOU NEED TO COMMUNICATE WITH:

- ✓ All Parishioners
- ✓ Various Groups (those attending for specific liturgies like Baptisms, Marriages, Funerals, First Holy Communion, Confirmation, Anniversary Masses, Months Mind Masses etc)
- ✓ Sick/Housebound/First Friday calls
- ✓ Staff Members and Volunteers

WHAT ARE THE MAIN MESSAGES YOU NEED TO COMMUNICATE?

- ✓ the Sunday / Holyday obligation has been suspended for the time being and those who cannot come to Mass are invited to participate on webcam or radio
- ✓ those who are sick or have any symptoms of or confirmed COVID-19 should stay at home
- ✓ close contacts of a person who has a confirmed or suspected case of the virus should stay at home
- ✓ it is suggested that those in the vulnerable category might also stay at home
- ✓ outline the parish plan for participation in the Eucharist and the Sacraments
- ✓ communicate the new capacity for the church (taking into consideration that one household can be seated together)
- ✓ outline the procedure for the distribution of Holy Communion in each church
- ✓ encourage all members of the congregation to wash and sanitise their hands before leaving home and perhaps bring their own pocket hand-sanitiser with them
- ✓ face coverings are advised

This list is not exhaustive.

EXAMPLES OF METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

- ✓ Parish Newsletter (to be collected on departure, in order to minimise risk)
- ✓ Signage in Churches and at approaches
- ✓ Parish website
- ✓ Parish social media accounts
- ✓ Parish e-newsletter
- ✓ Advert or interview on local radio / local newspaper
- ✓ Posters in local shops
- ✓ Announcements during Mass
- ✓ Signage in parish offices/parochial houses etc

EXAMPLES OF ANNOUNCEMENTS DURING MASS

- ✓ Welcome before Mass – ask all to remain in their seats during the liturgy etc
- ✓ Before the distribution of Holy Communion - advise how it will work
- ✓ Before final Blessing - ask people to leave the Church gradually after Mass and encourage them not to gather outside, so that physical distancing is maintained. Ask them to leave their parish donation in the box provided at the points allocated.
- ✓ Thank people for their cooperation etc

In so far as a Church-related outbreak of COVID-19 is possible, the appropriate communication policy is contained in the Resource on responding to an Outbreak of COVID-19.

SIGNAGE :

Arrange for appropriate signage which draws attention to:

- ✓ queuing
- ✓ movement of people
- ✓ physical distancing, hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette
- ✓ symptoms of COVID-19
- ✓ other relevant public health advice
- ✓ COVID-19 parish policy statement (on notice board)

There is a selection of informational posters for public health advice at from Government, HSE and HSA websites:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/ee0781-covid-19-posters-for-public-use/>

<https://www2.hse.ie/coronavirus/> (end of page)

https://www.hsa.ie/eng/topics/covid-19/covid-19_coronavirus.html

Signage may be required in some or all of the following places:

- ✓ Church Railings
- ✓ Church Doors – external
- ✓ Church Doors – internal/porch
- ✓ Benches/Pews that are out of bounds/available
- ✓ Sacristy – external and internal
- ✓ Toilets
- ✓ Kitchen/canteen
- ✓ On/near shrines
- ✓ Confession Boxes/Areas
- ✓ Collection Box Area etc
- ✓ Parochial House/Parish Office – external and internal
- ✓ Meeting Rooms
- ✓ Work areas and offices
- ✓ Any other area deemed appropriate

RESOURCE 9: HUMAN RESOURCES

PARISH CHECKLIST FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF

Task	Assigned To	Date Completed
Read the Government of Ireland <i>Return to Work Safely Protocol</i> and the <i>Return to Public Pastoral Life of the Church</i> document	All	
Remind Staff Members and Volunteers of the three requirements to slow the spread of COVID-19 (Hand Hygiene, Respiratory Etiquette and Physical Distancing) and display corresponding signage	Parish Priest	
Appoint a COVID-19 Parish Support Team	Parish Priest	
Consider your overall COVID-19 parish plan which should cover: 1. Updating your existing Risk Assessment & Safety Statement (these are already required under existing law) 2. Contact Tracing for Staff Members and Volunteers 3. Staff and Volunteer Training 4. Raise awareness of Physical distancing/Respiratory Etiquette/ Hand Hygiene 5. Possible risk exposure points for Staff and Volunteers 6. Controls to minimise risk 7. What to do in the event of a suspected case among staff/volunteers	Support Team	
Appoint Staff/Volunteer Rep(s) to liaise with the Parish Support Team	Parish Priest	
Implement the following forms / logs 1. Return to Work Forms for all Staff and Volunteers (supplied in this resource) 2. Contact Tracing Logs for Staff and Volunteers 3. Training Attendance Logs for Staff and Volunteers 4. Hygiene Logs for all areas		
Provide necessary training for staff members (this virtual training may be offered to parishes by the diocese – check with your diocesan office)	Parish Priest/ Diocese	
Install controls to prevent/reduce the risk of the spread of the virus 1. Install physical barriers where necessary 2. Make face coverings and other PPE available where necessary	Parish Priest	
Where controls necessitate changes to existing practices: 1. Advise Staff and Volunteers accordingly	Parish Priest	
Provide, as is reasonably practicable: ventilation, tissues, hand sanitisers, disinfectants, wipes, PPE; gloves, masks, waste bags	Parish Priest	
Provide additional support to vulnerable staff members and volunteers	Parish Priest or another	
Implement an appropriate cleaning schedule and refuse disposal arrangement for all areas	Co-ordinator of Cleaning Voulnteers	

COVID-19 RETURN TO WORK FORM - STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

Staff Member / Volunteer Name: _____

As an element of the Return to Work Safely Protocol you are required to complete a Return to Work Form in order to help minimise the spread of COVID-19 infection. I would ask you to please complete the form and return to me by email.

- ✓ Do you have symptoms of cough, fever, high temperature, sore throat, runny nose, breathlessness or flu like symptoms now or in the past 14 days? YES ☐ NO ☐
- ✓ Have you been diagnosed with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection in the last 14 days? YES ☐ NO ☐
- ✓ Are you a close contact of a person who is a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 in the past 14 days (ie less than 2 metres for more than 15 minutes accumulative in 1 day)? YES ☐ NO ☐
- ✓ Have you been advised by a doctor to self-isolate at this time? YES ☐ NO ☐
- ✓ Have you been advised by a doctor to stay at home at this time? YES ☐ NO ☐

If the answer to any of the questions above is 'yes', you are strongly advised to follow whatever medical advice you received.

Please provide details below of any other circumstances relating to COVID-19, not included in the above, which may need to be considered to allow your safe return to work. For further information on higher risk from Coronavirus see www.hse.ie

I understand that it is my responsibility to notify my employer / line-manager / volunteer coordinator should there be any material change to the above information.

Signed: _____
Staff Member / Volunteer Phone Number (Required)

Date: _____

Signed: _____
Parish Priest/ Employer

This form should be returned to your employer / volunteer coordinator in advance of your return to work

Your employer is collecting this sensitive personal data for the purposes of maintaining safety within the workplace in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. The legal basis for collecting this data is based on vital interests and maintaining occupational health and will be held securely in line with our retention policy. Strictest Confidentiality is ensured. This form will be filed in accordance with GDPR and retained only for the purposes of enacting our COVID-19 response plan.

COVID-19 VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF CHECKLIST

TO BE COMPLETED ALONG WITH THE RETURN TO WORK FORM

This checklist has been developed to help inform Volunteers and Staff about what they need to do to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the parish environment. All must work together to protect everyone.

Further information can be found at www.Gov.ie, www.hse.ie, www.hpsc.ie and www.hsa.ie

Control	Yes / No.	Action needed
1. Do you feel well and fit enough to return to Volunteering/Work?		
2. Are you up to date with the latest COVID-19 advice from Government?		
3. Are you aware of the signs and symptoms of COVID-19?		
4. Do you know how the virus is spread?		
5. Do you understand that you should not come to work/volunteer - even with a face mask - if you have any symptoms		
6. Have you completed and returned the Return to Work Form?		
7. Have you been given an induction and made aware of the measures that have been put in place to minimise the risk of exposure to COVID-19?		
8. Do you know who your "worker/workplace representative" is and how and when you should contact him / her?		
9. Do you know what to do in relation to physical distancing, (see www.hse.ie/coronavirus)		
10. Do you know what to do in relation to good hand hygiene (see www.hse.ie/coronavirus)		
11. Do you know what to do in relation to respiratory etiquette (see www.hse.ie/coronavirus)		
12. Do you know what to do if you start to develop symptoms of COVID-19? While at work, including where the isolation area is? (cf Resource 10)		
13. Do you understand the purpose of giving your Parish Priest any necessary information to maintain a COVID-19 contact tracing log?		
14. Have you been made aware of any changes to the emergency plans or first aid procedures for your workplace		
15. Are you aware that you should avoid sharing items such as cups, bottles, cutlery, pens etc.?		
16. Are you aware that any personal items brought with you must be cleaned and to avoid leaving them down on communal surfaces or to clean the surface after the personal item is removed?		
17. Have you been provided with cleaning materials, including gloves and disinfectant to clean your own workspace?		
18. Have you considered how you can reduce work-related travel and, where appropriate, conduct meetings online rather than in person?		
19. Do you know when you have to wear PPE and how to fit, use, remove, clean, store and dispose of any required PPE? (See Resource 5)		
20. Do you know what supports are available if you feel anxious or stressed?		
21. Do you have a plan for returning home, without public transport, if you become unwell while at work in or around the Church?		

If your situation changes after you complete and submit this form, please tell your Parish Priest:

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

This form will be filed in accordance with GDPR and retained only for the purposes of enacting our COVID-19 response plan

RESOURCE 10: PARISH POLICY STATEMENT

COVID-19 PARISH POLICY STATEMENT TEMPLATE

(TO BE DISPLAYED ON SUITABLE NOTICE BOARDS, ETC)

The Parish of _____ is committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace for all our Volunteers, Staff, Parishioners and Visitors. To ensure that, we have developed a parish COVID-19 plan. All members of the parish community have a shared responsibility for the implementation of this plan and a combined effort will help contain the spread of the virus.

We will:

- continue to monitor our COVID-19 response and amend this plan in consultation with our staff
- provide up to date information to our staff and volunteers on the Public Health advice issued by the HSE and Gov.ie
- display information on the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and correct hand-washing techniques
- establish a system by means of which staff and volunteers can report concerns relating to COVID-19
- inform all volunteers, staff, parishioners and visitors of essential hygiene and respiratory etiquette and physical distancing requirements
- adapt the Church and Parish Buildings to facilitate physical distancing
- keep a log of Volunteers and Staff to help with contact tracing
- have all Volunteers and Staff attend an induction / familiarisation briefing
- provide instructions for Volunteers and Staff to follow if they develop signs and symptoms of COVID-19 during work
- intensify cleaning in line with government advice

The plan is a live working document and it will be reviewed on an ongoing basis and amended to take into account new guidance from www.Gov.ie, www.dbei.ie, www.hse.ie, www.hpsc.ie, www.hsa.ie

Feedback on any concerns can be made to the parish priest.

Signed:

Parish Priest

Date:

RESOURCE 11: RESPONDING TO AN OUTBREAK OF COVID-19 IN A PARISH SETTING

****If you develop symptoms of COVID-19, self-isolate immediately and inform your assigned COVID-19 manager****

Please read this resource in conjunction with Checklist No 4 on Health and Safety Authority Website.

https://www.hsa.ie/eng/topics/COVID-19/return_to_work_safely_templates_and_checklists/employers-checklist-no-41.pdf

If a Priest/Deacon/Staff Member or Volunteer develops symptoms of COVID-19 while in the workplace

Each person must have a plan in place in the event of feeling ill at work, including knowing who in the parish to inform, and how they will get home safely without using public transport.

- ✓ They should stop what they are doing and isolate immediately from other people
- ✓ If not wearing a face mask, put one on and keep a distance of least 2 metres from others
- ✓ Inform others in the building and the person to whom you report
- ✓ They should go home as soon as possible
- ✓ Implement transport home plan and call their GP when they get home. Do not use public transport of any kind to go home

The Parish Team will:

- ✓ Arrange for cleaning and disinfection of any areas involved, at least one hour after the affected person has left the building
- ✓ Assist with Contact Tracing by the HSE. Please consult your volunteer contact tracing log

If a person is very unwell and cannot go home immediately:

- ✓ Remain self-isolating in the building. (An isolation area should be identified in the parish plan)
- ✓ Contact your GP
- ✓ Avoid touching people, surfaces and objects
- ✓ Cover your mouth and nose with tissues when you cough or sneeze. Bin the tissues in a waste bag.

If a person has to leave work because of coronavirus-related symptom the area must close until it is established that it is safe to resume work. The extent of the closure will depend on what the volunteer was doing and where.

If a member of the Congregation becomes ill during Mass

- ✓ Stewards should be informed and should calmly ask others who may be nearby to move
- ✓ Ask the person who is unwell to move to the isolation area, unless he/she is able to go home safely
- ✓ Arrange for cleaning and disinfection of any areas involved, at least one hour after the affected person has left the building
- ✓ Assist with Contact Tracing by the HSE, by seeking the contact details of those who were in the immediate area

If a member of the congregation informs you they have confirmed COVID-19

- ✓ Enquire if they have followed national guidelines for a COVID-19 confirmed patient
- ✓ Enquire if they have had contact tracing done by the HSE
- ✓ If you consider it appropriate, seek advice from the HSA

If a priest/deacon is a confirmed case of COVID-19 or is identified as a close contact of a confirmed case and is required to self-isolate for two weeks

- ✓ Immediately self-isolate follow guidance available at www.hse.ie
- ✓ Inform your staff and parish support team
- ✓ Implement plan for ministry cover that has been arranged in your diocese
- ✓ Notify parishioners via relevant communication channels
- ✓ Return to work as advised by your GP. Complete return to work documentation for approval by your Bishop/Diocesan Administrator

RESOURCE 12: CHURCH READINESS FORM

This form to be returned to Bishop/Diocesan Administrator before the return to public celebration of the Eucharist and the Sacraments.

Parish: _____ Church: _____

Action Required	Yes / No
We have established and trained a Parish Support Team with relevant expertise, to plan and provide training for volunteers. This team includes a “worker/workplace representative”	
We have identified the means by which this parish plan will be communicated to the parishioners	
We have sourced and trained a team of stewards	
We have identified and trained a team of volunteer cleaners	
We have implemented physical distancing measures and associated signage	
We have identified the new capacity for any one congregation and how it can be publicly notified in advance of a return to public celebration of the Eucharist / Sacraments	
We have agreed a mechanism for providing everyone with an opportunity to come to Mass while ensuring smaller congregations	
We have developed a plan for access and movement in the sacristy and sanctuary	
We have identified a suitable plan for the distribution of Holy Communion in this church	
We have developed an area suitable for the Sacrament of Reconciliation and have identified a way of implementing the required modifications	
We have planned and prepared a secure means for receiving contributions without the need to pass bags or baskets	
We have a COVID-19 plan for the safety of staff members / volunteers, which is consistent with the Return to Work Safely Protocol	
We have a plan in place to respond to a church-related outbreak of COVID-19	

Signed: _____ PP / Adm. Date: _____

Approved: _____ Bishop/Administrator Date: _____

Archdiocese of Tuam
www.tuamarchdiocese.org

Diocese of Achonry
www.achonrydiocese.org

Diocese of Clonfert
www.clonfertdiocese.ie

Diocese of Elphin
www.elphindiocese.ie

Diocese of Galway, Kilmacduagh and Kilfenora
www.galwaydiocese.ie

Diocese of Killala
www.killaladiocese.org