



May 12, 2020

Dear Beloved of Christ,

Christ is Risen

We wish you and your precious families all the blessings of the Holy Fifty, praying that the Church in your individual homes continues to thrive, fueled by the spiritual energy acquired during Holy Lent. As the governments of the States comprising the Diocese begin the phased re-opening of their economies, we too are initiating Phase 1 of service resumption in the Diocese Churches. Our guiding principle remains focused on maintaining the spiritual and physical health of priests, deacons, and congregations. The guidelines for this Phase 1 are:

- 1- Liturgies will resume in Diocese Churches **except Kentucky** starting Saturday, May 16, 2020; only Liturgies will resume physically in the Churches, all other events and activities will remain remote until further notice.
- 2- The physical protection of the priest, deacons, and attending families is paramount
- 3- Each Church's plan must faithfully respect and uphold local ordinances, e.g. social distancing measures and hygiene guidelines set by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- 4- The maximum number of attendees for indoor services varies among States, so the following limits on attendance (which includes priests and deacons) will be strictly enforced by each Church:
 - a. North Carolina Churches – 10 People
 - b. South Carolina Churches– 10 People
 - c. Kentucky Churches – 10 People Starting May 20
 - d. Virginia Churches – 30 People
- 5- Each Church's priest will set the service schedule to suit the size of the congregation and local circumstances; the priest will designate one day per week for elders only
- 6- The priest will contact members in sequence to offer a date when they can attend the liturgy as a family; if the date does not suit the family, the priest will reschedule your turn
- 7- On your designated day arrive on schedule because the Church doors will be locked to avoid exceeding occupancy limit; do not show up at Church without being asked by the priest to come
- 8- If you appear at Church without the priest's permission you will not be allowed to enter
- 9- If you or any member of your family are not feeling well please inform the priest and he will reschedule your turn to a later date when all members of your family are well again



10- During the Liturgy, including Communion, social distancing will be maintained as much as practicable, and all attendees must leave without congregating immediately following the Liturgy

11- During the Liturgy children must remain beside their parents at all times and cannot wander around the Church for their and everyone else's safety and health; note the cry room is not open for your use

12- In the event that the local government reverts to shelter in place, or if evaluation of this plan uncovers systemic failures, the plan will be suspended immediately until the cause ceases to exist, namely the local government reopens or the systemic failures are adequately rectified

Please continue to tend to the spiritual needs of our children and to the material needs of our brothers and sisters who are suffering from the economic consequences of this pandemic, and those who are in distress because of the uncertain times we are all navigating.

Above all, continue to pray individually and with your families for the safety of the world, and for the reopening of the Church's Gates.

Please stay tuned for further announcements as we move forward through this difficult time.

May God bless and protect all of you,

Bishop Peter

Bishop, Coptic Orthodox Diocese of North & South Carolina & Kentucky.

And Papal Vicar of the Churches of Virginia.