

# Parish Development Conference Call

## *April 30 2020*

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# PARISH REACTIONS AND RESPONSES TO CORONA VIRUS

# Parish Development Forum

Suggestions? Want to help?  
Contact Joe Kormos 513-518-5878  
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Previously scheduled for July 9 thru 11 @ St John the Baptist Church  
Warren OH will now be virtual.

- Theme ...something like...The Corona Virus and the Timeless Church:  
*Coping and Adapting*
  - Help parishes navigate an uncertain future and a significantly different public landscape in the context of the virus *and future similar dislocations*.
- Style
  - Structured Discussion - multiple perspectives, asking good questions and seeding discussion and dialogue.
  - Skills, Practices & Resources - for the 'new normal'.

*Probable timeframe late July –though subject to change.*



# Discussion Questions

## *With respect to Corona virus...*

- What useful parish practices have you heard of?
- What concerns/impacts do you see/expect in your parish? Parishioners? The Church?
- What help do parishes need right now?
- Do you see positive outcomes from all of this? Lessons learned?
- What might be the short, intermediate and longer term impact on:
  - Parish vision and identity?
  - Worship?
  - Leadership?
  - Community? Communication?
  - Stewardship? Ministry and Discipleship?
  - Formation and education?
  - Evangelization and growth?

- Have the necessary qualities of healthy parishes changed as a result of Corona?
- Have certain gifts or skills that may have been undervalued in the past become more important?

*Some would say that our “timeless” faith is confronted with embracing new approaches and solutions.*

- What does creativity, agility, nimbleness and adaptability “look like” in Orthodox Christianity?

# Parish Corona Practices: Making It Work

- Liturgical
  - Streaming services
  - Video of reading gospel/epistle sent via email or fb
  - Sending texts for services; Typikha etc.
  - Services at home
  - Share streaming from various parishes
  - Standard conference call worship
  - Daily liturgies; Online sign up
- Other
  - Build first Email list
  - Study sessions; bible Adult Ed on zoom; email sessions
  - Virtual coffee hour –included some not usually there – health etc.
  - Sermons on line /email
  - Daily video meditations
  - Children’s zoom sermon each Sunday 1:00 PM
  - Confession/absolution by phone/video chat
  - Small groups online
- Other (cont’d)
  - Pascha parade/caravan
  - Blessing Baskets from car trunks in parking lot
  - Begin to accept online donations.
  - Parish council mtg. or Committee mtgs. via Skype et al
  - Strengthened role for PC
  - Charitable Fund for parishioners in need; Money Orders
  - Pascha Video
  - Daily bible study quiz
  - Parish Family game night
  - Various social apps “Houseparty”
  - Music
    - Tips; Piano playing individual parts from a new or challenging hymn
    - “Sing along” videos
  - “Soothing secular topics”; from parishioners (“Birds”)

# Concerns We've Heard

- Sickness; Death; Economic; Emotional
- Lack of physical pastoral contact
- Priest busyness/burnout
- Letting down parishioners - not there when I needed you; hospital visits
- Staying home – ‘Not that bad!’
- Churches will come back in slow motion
- Some parishes may not reopen
- Inability to “pivot” hastens closure?
- Dependency on “Fund Raising”
- Slippery slope

# Positives

- Thirst - People miss parish; people; worship
- Take it seriously when gone
- Change
  - Dislocation. Tectonic shift.
  - Enable adapting ... even forcing change. Good time to act.
  - Do new things -- decidedly NOT business as usual.
  - Opportunities in disruption
- Explore excellence -- music; preaching
- Slower Life - Family time
- Reflection
  - What if this was gone?
  - What does it mean to be the church?
  - Opportunity to renew and reinvigorate the church *not* in the building;
  - Work of the church goes on
- Learning
  - Priest: "I forced myself to learn a few things."
  - Reading bible books; services at home
  - Educational offerings
- Less need for facilities?
- Cleaner churches!
- Less barriers for Inquirers
- Lab for creativity, adaptability, nimbleness
- Work on important parish projects
- Partnering with other parishes

# New skills -- or -- of increased importance

- Technology
- External communication
- Art/layout
- Discernment of gifts
- Delegating
- Sharing decision making -- inspiring participation
- Creativity; inspiring creativity
- Agility/nimbleness
- Online presenting and teaching
- Selecting class topics of interest to your people
- Parish emails/connection

# Reopening

- Cleaning
  - carpets, pews, bathrooms, doorknobs, light switches, microphones.
  - Use proper disinfectants, approved by the CDC to kill coronavirus.
  - Hymnals or communal Bibles service books. Remove?
  - Clean between services. Have cleaners sign up for a service time using Facebook Events or similar.
  - Cleaning check list: what's been cleaned and when – for each room.
  - Develop a list of procedures for your volunteers. Train them on this list through Zoom .
- Hand sanitizing stations
- Social distancing floor layouts?
- Post signs encouraging non-contact greetings such as waves.
- Post proper hand washing instruction.in restrooms
- Wearing Masks
- Ask volunteers to make masks for those without
- Continue offering online services for those at risk or not comfortable attending in person.
- Offering multiple services enables social distancing guidelines.
- Go straight into nave; avoid congregating where social distancing not possible.
- Avoid handing out bulletins
- Special choir and nursery considerations
- Is physically “passing the plate” a thing of the past?
- Do door greeters do their jobs differently, or at all?
- If online worship is here to stay invest in quality cameras, microphones, internet.
- Will a new staff or volunteer position emerge from COVID-19?
  - Oversee the tech aspects of the new digital frontier?
  - Become responsible to develop groups and strategies to reach people online?