



DIOCESE OF WHEELING-CHARLESTON

Norms for Reopening Parish Facilities for Meetings and Gatherings

Updated as of September 24, 2020

The following norms are intended to assist pastors as they reopen their parish/mission facilities to serve those entrusted to their pastoral care. Obviously, the diversity in size, location and facilities will require pastors to make some adaptations in the following norms. However, the substance and intent of these norms are to be observed. These norms are provided to promote a safe environment for our faith communities.

Please note that the State of West Virginia currently does not permit gatherings of more than 25 under most circumstances. For any clarification you might need, please consult your local county health department.

1. Parish Meetings and Formation

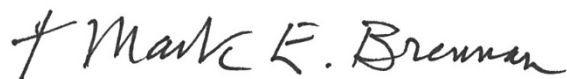
- a. Parishes may convene and host in-person regular meetings of parish committees, most importantly Parish Council, Finance Council, parish administrative staff and VIRTUS trainings. Preparations must be made in advance for physical distancing, such as sitting on every other seat. Attendees must wear masks upon entry and exit from parish buildings and during meetings. No tactile greetings are permitted. Hand sanitizer must be made available to all those in attendance. No food or drink is to be served. Any handouts must be taken home by those in attendance or discarded before leaving. Use projection devices when possible. Follow state and county guidance regarding the maximum number of attendees for public gatherings. Disinfect the meeting space upon conclusion. Please consider making provisions for participants who wish to participate virtually or by teleconference.
- b. Group meetings may reconvene at this time in our parishes. This includes parish groups, youth groups, prayer groups, or outside groups such as ecumenical groups, AA, scouting, etc. Guidelines in Section 1 (a) above must also be followed. **For youth groups, minors are not to be taken off-site by parish employees or volunteers. They are not to travel in groups for diocesan or parish-sponsored events. Field trips are also not to take place at this time. Youth should travel only with their parents or guardians and only with members of their own households.**

- c. Adult religious education, youth religious education and formation classes and related programming, etc., may meet in person at this time and are to follow the norms put into place by the Department of Evangelization and Catechesis. Contact Daniel Maul for more information in this regard.

2. Indoor, Parish Hall or Gymnasium Events

- a. ***Funeral Luncheons and other gatherings with meals:*** Presently, parishes may NOT have funeral luncheons/dinners.
- b. ***Wedding Receptions, Baptismal/Confirmation gatherings, Bridal/Baby Showers, etc.:*** Presently parishes may not hold these types of gatherings.
- c. ***Charitable Outreach:*** Parishes have been and still are encouraged to continue charitable outreach to the community during the pandemic, with special emphasis on operating food pantries, “meals on wheels,” utility assistance, clothing distribution, and outreach with local partners such as the Gabriel Project, Red Cross, St. Vincent de Paul Society, etc. Be certain to follow social distancing guidelines, use location specific plans to avoid contact, always wear masks and encourage hand washing/use of hand sanitizer. Organizers must clearly mark separate doors for ingress/egress and mark floors for one-way traffic flow. Track names of those in attendance at the entrance of your facility for contact tracing purposes. Prohibit use of public drinking fountains. Clean bathrooms frequently. Sanitize after each facility use.
- d. ***Indoor or Outdoor Fund-Raising Auctions, Craft Fairs or public events without food or beverage service:*** At this time, you may seek permission to have these events. First, assemble your plans for the event and submit them to your county health department. Should you receive county approval, please forward your plans and the approval from the county health department to Bryan Minor in the Chancery, and we will respond with an answer as soon as possible.
- e. ***Athletics:*** With the permission of the pastor/administrator, parish indoor athletic practices, games or recreational activities on parish property may resume at this time, but these are all subject to WVEA and WVDHHR color coded guidance and policies (green and yellow: you may proceed; gold, orange or red follow state rules). Guidance for Catholic School facilities is available through the Superintendent of Catholic Schools. If you have any questions, please refer to your county health department.

- f. **Fellowship:** Per the guidelines already distributed for the resumption of public liturgies, no coffee, donuts or other gatherings are permitted in halls, gymnasiums or other church properties.
- g. **Bingo:** With the approval of the pastor/administrator, bingo may resume under the following conditions:
- i. You must follow state guidelines for bingo found at this website - <https://tax.wv.gov/Documents/Publications/Covid19Response/SafetyGuidanceForBingoHalls.pdf>. Failure to abide by state policies will automatically result in termination of bingo operations.
 - ii. You must submit your plan to the county health department and secure written approval to begin bingo on your property.
 - iii. Submit your plan to begin bingo along with written permission from the county health department to Bryan Minor for diocesan consideration, and we will respond as soon as possible.
- h. **Rentals:** Parish halls and gymnasiums are not available for parishioner or public rental at this time.
3. **Outdoor Facilities and Venues:** While outdoor events appear to provide more flexibility, it is important that care be taken to keep these events safe. Therefore safe-distancing is important as is the wearing of masks and meals are not to be served at these locations.



Bishop Mark E. Brennan