



**COVID-19**

# **Parish Contingency Plan**

## **PARISH PLAN FRAMEWORK**

**April, 2020**





# Our Goal

To move our parishes from reactive  
*Crisis Management* into proactive  
*Contingency Planning* and action.

**Purpose of this booklet:** To assist each parish in the development of a Contingency Plan designed to immediately support our Church, the parish family and the local community as a result of the Coronavirus, COVID-19.

Over the past few weeks, we have seen our Church, and the world, in “Crisis Mode” characterized by fast-moving, far-reaching daily decisions and announcements based on rapidly emerging information.

Although we concede that a need to closely monitor and respond to further potential threats exists daily, we also acknowledge that a need, and opportunity, exists to have a practical Contingency Plan in place to guide our parish over the next 90 days, with considerations carrying us to the end of 2020.

**Definitions** The following definitions are foundational to our planning efforts:

⌘ **Crisis Management** concerns the way emergencies are handled *in the moment*.

⌘ **Contingency planning** is about assessing risk and putting processes in place to deal with a potential emergency or crises.

The two disciplines work together to help a parish cope with threats to its continuity as a thriving parish.



# From Crisis to Contingency

## Guidelines, with Parish examples...



### CONNECT

*with God through worship and prayer; and to one another for physical, social and emotional support.*

- ⌘ Live Streaming of Services for our parish
- ⌘ Supporting our Worship with on-line Liturgy or Service books
- ⌘ On-line Prayer Groups and Bible Studies
- ⌘ “Zoom” or related technology used to connect people & faces (people like to see people)
- ⌘ Digital Calendar of Events replacing our Weekly Bulletin to connect people
- ⌘ Special emphasis to connect youth on-line
- ⌘ “Most Vulnerable Parishioners” (our “MVPs”) are aligned to others for regular support
- ⌘ Parish communication plan and protocols in place and being used



### PLAN

*develop a contingency plan for your parish, forming a foundation for further action and monitoring of the situation.*

- ⌘ Plan includes: Worship, Well-Being, Finances, Stewardship, Healthy Practices, Connections
- ⌘ Detailed financial contingency plan developed
- ⌘ Non-essential expenses and spending immediately suspended
- ⌘ Stewardship Plan reviewed and modified, as necessary
- ⌘ Emphasis placed on digital stewardship pledge fulfillment and donations
- ⌘ Stewardship messaging modified to accent need to support one another, supplement potential loss of event income and the need to support our parish infrastructure
- ⌘ Parish using good health practices to minimize virus; plan ready if parishioner is infected



### PURIFY

*ensure our physical environment minimizes the potential of spreading the virus by complying with all Archdiocesan and governmental guidelines and establishing excellence in personal health practices.*

- ⌘ Plan in place to receive and process all packages and mail
- ⌘ Signs... and more signs!
- ⌘ Ensure adequate sanitizing and hand-washing products are available in all locations
- ⌘ Ensure proper “social distancing” at all times
- ⌘ Remind everyone...habits are hard to break!



# Parish Plan Framework

*"Commit to the Lord whatever you do,  
and he will establish your plans." Proverbs 16:3*

## Task Force and Contingency Plan Development

1. Parish Council affirms framework.
2. Select Task Force Coordinator, who will work under the authority and guidance of the Proistamenos and the Parish Council.
3. Coordinator selects Team Leads for each area of the framework.
4. Team Leads ask people to join their team and develop a small plan (even a checklist of ideas with dates will suffice).
5. Coordinator creates a written plan for the parish (by consolidating the Team Lead plans into a single document).
6. Parish Council approves the plan.
7. Plan is shared with the Parish.
8. Implement and report on progress.

**Plan development- start to finish: no more than 10 days.**





# Approach

## Worship

**Objective:** Ensure a positive and meaningful worship experience for all seeking Christ and His Church.

### Questions to Consider in the Contingency Plan

1. How do we pray together, outside of defined services, during this time?
2. How can we launch (or continue to improve) technology-delivered worship experiences? Do we have a technology lead for this area?
3. What preparation or materials can we provide to deepen the participation of those worshipping on-line?
4. How can we best integrate music into our worship via technology? Do we need to?
5. Recognizing guidelines have been provided, are we prepared to offer the following sacraments and services?
  1. Weddings
  2. Baptisms
  3. Confession
  4. Funerals
6. What is our plan for Pascha if the situation does not improve?

## Parishioner Well-Being

**Objective:** Ensure the safety and support of all parishioners, but especially those who might be our MVPs “Most Vulnerable Parishioners.”

### Actions/Questions to Consider in the Contingency Plan

1. Do we have a list of our MVPs?
2. Have individuals been assigned to each MVP in order to check-in on a regular or daily basis?
3. Do parishioners know how or where to go to ask for help from the parish?
4. Has the parish set aside relief funds or goods for those in need?



# Approach

## Connection

**Objective:** Develop a effective programs and actions to keep “people connected to people.”

### **Actions/Questions to Consider in the Contingency Plan**

1. People want connection in a time of crisis. They not only want to read about the plans, and hear from leaders, they want to see faces. Have we expanded our use of “Zoom” (or a related technology) to link “people to people,” “people to ministries,” “people to religious education or faith-formation programs” or “people to prayer groups”?
2. Do we have a lead to train and manage “Zoom”?
3. Has the parish replaced its Weekly Bulletin’s list of parish events with an on-line, calendar of digital meetings or gatherings (chats)?
4. The opportunity for Outreach is never greater than today – do we have a plan in place to show our parish’s support to the local community and reconnect with non-active Orthodox?

## Health Practices

**Objective:** Ensure our physical environment minimizes the potential of spreading the virus.

### **Actions/Questions to Consider in the Contingency Plan**

1. Are we meeting the guidelines of Archbishop Elpidophoros of America and the Eparchial Synod?
2. Are we in compliance with all local, state and federal guidelines?
3. Are we protecting our Priest?
4. Do we ensure proper “Social Distancing” for all who may enter our building or church and do we have signage to that effect?
5. Have procedures been implemented as to the handling and sanitizing of documents and deliveries?
6. Is the parish, in general, being properly sanitized, especially high points of contact including handles, surfaces and phones?



# Approach

## Finances

**Objective: Ensure the financial stability of the Parish.**

### Questions to Consider in the Contingency Plan

1. Good crisis management includes the development of a financial contingency plan as soon-as-possible; as such, the immediate development of options for the 2020 Parish Budget is highly recommended. When will the plan be ready for review and when will initiate it?
2. Are there major fund-raising activities or alternative sources of income (ie: hall rentals, etc) which will be cancelled and what is the impact?
3. Are there secondary sources of income which can be utilized to fill the gap for any operating expense shortfalls (hall rentals, etc) and are they at risk?
4. Are there “non-essential” expenses which can be immediately delayed or cancelled?
5. Should you explore “non-traditional” financial options such as applying for a loan from a bank or participation in the federal Small Business Loan Disaster Recovery Fund (which includes non-profits)?

## Stewardship

**Objective: Initiate plans to enable continued financial gifts and fulfillment of current stewardship commitments.**

### Questions to Consider in the Contingency Plan

1. What is our confidence level we will achieve our 2020 Stewardship goal?
2. The opportunities to give are significantly narrowed when parishioners are not able to attend Church; how can we can develop (or expand) our digital contribution programs and capabilities to allow parishioners to offer their financial gifts?
3. Stewardship messaging and communications change during a time of crisis. How will our stewardship messages be modified to accent our faith in Christ, the need to support one another, and our efforts to supplement lost income due to the potential cancellation of fund-raising events? All the while, still supporting the operational infrastructure of the parish?
4. Will special appeals be necessary? If so, when?



# Approach

## Coordinator

**Objective: Provide overall coordination and thought leadership of our Parish Contingency Planning and Implementation.**

### **Questions to Consider in the Contingency Plan**

1. How often will the Task Force meet and what is its relationship with the Parish Council? (for expediency, it would be best to have PC members expand their current responsibilities to include a role on the Task Force, if possible)
2. Are there any perceived conflicts of protocol which need to be resolved within the parish (such as having the PC meet on-line vs. in-person).
3. Will there be a comprehensive written Contingency Plan (recommended) or just assigned tasks as they arise?
4. When will the team launch and how will it be communicated?





"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope." *Jeremiah 29:11*

