



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS ^{OF} PITTSBURGH

OFFICE OF THE METROPOLITAN

March 17, 2020

St. Alexios the Man of God, St. Patrick, Enlightener of Ireland

To the reverend Clergy, esteemed Parish Council members, and devout faithful of the Holy and God-Protected Metropolis of Pittsburgh.

We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed— always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

St. Paul's 2nd Letter to the Corinthians, 4:8-10.

These words of the Holy Apostle Paul speak as forcefully to the Church throughout the world today as they did to the Christian community at Corinth to which they were initially addressed two thousand years ago. The specific trials may differ across time and cultures, but the challenges they present must be borne not with complaint and self-pity, but in a manner consonant with our life in the Lord Jesus. In our time we find ourselves confronted with a disease that threatens not only our lives but our manner of living. While we are tempted to focus on the affect the change in life has on each of us personally, our identity as a Christian community also requires us to consider more highly the needs of others rather than ourselves - in the words once again of Saint Paul, we are called to *"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."* (Gal 6:2)

It is in this spirit of bearing the burdens of those at greatest risk to the current disease - the elderly, immunocompromised, those with respiratory conditions or diseases, and those who are unaware of potential complications - that we have been called in recent days to limit our interactions with others, in order to safeguard those in need around us. The need to self-limit has increased with our developing understanding of the present strain of coronavirus and the manner of its spreading. We are called to respond as the Body of Christ in a way that will protect the most vulnerable while remaining faithful to our identity as a community of prayer. **Please review carefully the attached announcement related to the operation of our Metropolis and parishes. I expect all my communities to abide by the directives set forth until further notice.**

With Archpastoral blessings and love in the Lord,

+ Metropolitan Savas

+SAVAS

Metropolitan of Pittsburgh



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Announcement and Policies Related to the Operation of the Metropolis and its Parishes During the Current Pandemic

Metropolitan's Schedule and Travel

His Eminence is cancelling his public appearances until further notice. Those who have been scheduled for visitations after March 31 will be informed by Archdeacon Ryan Gzikowski about the status of the visits.

Metropolis Office

The offices of the Metropolis of Pittsburgh will be officially closed effective immediately. Individual staff members can be contacted at their appropriate email addresses, which can be found at <https://pittsburgh.goarch.org/metropolis-staff>. Keep in mind that while the offices are closed, there will be limited access to mail, telephone, and office voicemail. The most effective means of communication is via email. We ask everyone to be patient as we attempt to maintain essential functionality under these conditions.

Non-Essential Gatherings, Meetings

Non-essential gatherings (coffee hour, social activities, etc.) will be discontinued in all parishes. Classes and meetings (catechism, parish council and philoptochos, retreats) should be transitioned to videoconference. The guidelines promulgated by the respective states should be observed, especially with respect to fundraising activities of the parishes (like luncheons or fish fries).

Services

Church services *may* continue as scheduled within our parishes, but **the parishioners are directed to participate via the internet**. A minimum compliment should be present at the parish (no more than 5 persons including the priest, all of whom should be physically healthy and at low risk for the disease, who will participate at the invitation of the priest). Those unable to participate via live streaming are encouraged to utilize other resources available to the faithful (*see below*). Those clergy, cantors, and parish leaders who fall within the higher risk groups (older than 65; having long-term respiratory conditions; being immunocompromised or living with the immunocompromised; etc.) must remain home.

Funerals

In the event of the passing into eternal life of one of the faithful, the funeral may be scheduled at the parish, but should only be attended by the family of the deceased. If the parish has the ability to live-stream services, then the family may request the streaming of the funeral. Following the interment there should be no *makaria* offered, and the family can be encouraged to host such a gathering after the current restrictions are lifted. In the week after the funeral, a Trisagion service may be appended to the end of one of the services within the parish to offer the community's prayer for the deceased.

Resources for Prayer, Worship

Parishes continuing with services under the restrictions listed above are encouraged to live-stream their services using one of the widely available applications or websites (YouTube, Facebook, etc.).

Parishioners are encouraged to:

- Spend time at the appropriate moments to participate via video in the services. If your parish does not broadcast its services, you can find other options at <https://www.goarch.org/live-broadcasts>
- Those with newer AppleTV devices, Roku, or Amazon Fire can find the Archdiocesan channel: <https://www.goarch.org/tv>
- Utilize the Archdiocesan Online Chapel for texts of services, daily readings, and lives of the Saints: <https://www.goarch.org/chapel>
- Utilize the various service texts available on AGES Initiatives <http://www.agesinitiatives.com/dcs/public/dcs/servicesindex.html>, singing or reading the hymns.
 - Replace the litanies of petitions by saying "Lord, have mercy" three times, and replace the Priest's exclamations or blessings with "Through the prayers of our holy fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God have mercy on us and save us. Amen."
- There are many edifying bible studies and educational podcasts available via Ancient Faith Ministries (<https://www.ancientfaith.com/>) or Orthodox Christian Network (<http://myocn.net/>)