

UPDATED HEALTH & SAFETY PLAN RELATED TO CORONAVIRUS

v.2021-03

As the worldwide pandemic remains fluid, our Health & Safety Plan related to Coronavirus has been evolving over these past several months. The plan takes into consideration not just our experience as the pandemic has unfolded, but also ongoing training, consultation, guidelines and updated requirements. This work is based upon the latest guidelines by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), American Academy of Pediatrics, The State of Ohio Departments of Health, Education as well as Job & Family Services (under which the school is licensed), the Hamilton County Department of Health, and the Diocese of Southern Ohio. The plan was developed also with consultation from industry leaders in cleaning & disinfection, including Quip Laboratories, Professional Associations, our local area school districts, and Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center. It is safe to say that the guidelines we base this work on have changed several times already and we expect yet more changes, so we have designed this plan to remain as adaptive as possible to best meet the health and safety of those we serve and those who serve with us, both for the parish as well as day school. This plan is meant to be reviewed in an ongoing manner by our Vestry while we remain in a public health emergency. *The fundamental goal of our COVID Health & Safety Plan is to help provide the safest and most effective environment and best practices and response possible in order to continue our mission to make God’s love known by who we are, what we practice and how we serve others in God’s Name.*

Updated Operational Criteria

Following the latest CDC and Department of Health guidance we have received in January 2021, we are updating the Operational Criteria. While The State of Ohio Public Health Advisory System (OPHAS) continues to serve as a key indicator for community health and the rate of community spread, OPHAS is no longer seen as the sole indicator that we can use to base operations that encompass both the school and parish, as well as essential ministry that we support, such as housing and social services. St. Thomas will now use as our Operating Criteria a combination of key indicators, including:

- Safety provisions, supplies and adequate staffing available to maintain our COVID Health Policy and reliability of operation
- Number of known transmission, both active and cumulative as well as the number quarantined due to an identified close contact
- Community Health Measures, including current OPHAS level

Following the state guidelines and best practices of our local school districts, St. Thomas will monitor and assess these indices on a weekly basis each Thursday to determine any action needed for the following week to help ensure ongoing operations for both the school and parish. Within OPHAS, each level will call for specific protocols of capacity and protective measures.

Applying OPHAS Guidance to St. Thomas Operational Plan

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
OPEN - CAUTION	OPEN - LIMITED	OPEN - RESTRICTED	CRITICAL w/ MOST RESTRICTIONS
School operations within CDC and state guidelines. (low-to mid-level restrictions)	School operations and programs on limited basis, following CDC & Dept. of Health guidelines.	School Operations with higher health restrictive health & safety measures as directed, following CDC & Dept. of Health guidelines.	Highest amounts of restrictions, precautions and safety measures as directed, following CDC & Dept. of Health guidelines.

Following the state guidelines and best practices of our local school districts, St. Thomas Nursery School would assess the key indicators on a weekly basis (each Thursday) to determine the operational level and any needed actions for the following week.

There are Four Fundamental Pillars of the Health & Safety Plan Related to Coronavirus:

- A Clean & Healthy Environment
- Shared Practices
- COVID Health Policy
- Stewardship of Resources, Response and Oversight.

I. A Clean & Healthy Environment

We begin with the premise that we have established and maintain a clean and healthy environment. CDC Guidelines have served as the basis for a series of enhanced protocols for cleaning and disinfection. Part of these enhancements have meant new guidelines as to the cleaning products which are considered safe while maintaining an efficacy to not only clean but disinfect and eradicate bacteria and virus germs. The CDC list is then reviewed and updated further by the Ohio Department of Job & Family Services which is the licensing body for St. Thomas Nursery School. Further consultation has been undertaken with representatives from Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center. We also rely on resources from the American Academy of Pediatrics and other professional groups. The result is that St. Thomas is equipped with the latest array of procedures, products and equipment to clean and disinfect all common areas of our building. Additional training for our staff have included before-and-after care, as well as procedures between sessions, services and during class usage. A healthy environment begins but does not end with cleaning.

Enhanced Ventilation in Key Areas

Last spring, as we began to learn more about the virus and began a deep clean of all areas of the building, we also undertook an additional review of our ventilation system to improve air filtration as well as air flow itself. St. Thomas has added additional air purifiers with HEPA filters to go above and beyond recommended air circulation suggestions. These filters are in all major common areas, meetings spaces and offices.

Personal Protection Equipment (PPE)

In addition to air purifiers for each office, staff were also consulted as to what Personal Protection Equipment would allow them to perform their roles in the safest way possible. This may include plexiglass shields or face shields, personal sanitation supplies and face masks. St. Thomas has also taken steps to make sure that hand sanitation dispensers are available at every entrance as well as key locations and every meeting room, in addition to having disposable face masks available for staff and visitors. Following updated guidance, we will utilize personal face masks for all students and parishioners (3 year-olds to adults).

Physical Distancing and Capacity Guidelines

Specific guidelines have been developed for both the school as well as the parish. These guidelines direct not only how many people can be in a given space, but also the duration of usage and special arrangement, ensuring adequate physical distancing as appropriate.

Restricted Access & Usage of Buildings

As part of our enhanced protocols, drop-off and pickup for the school has changed; as well as how and when we use our building. Due to space requirements for the school and the cleaning protocols required, we also need to increase the level of building safety and security. While the school is in session and in between drop-off/pick-up, the entrances will be locked and entry granted by a staff member meeting the visitor at the door. The church staff will remain available on-call and by appointment, but “drop-in” office hours will not be available as they were before. The church will be open & available for individual prayer, 3pm-5pm Tuesdays & Thursdays. Because of these measures and the guidelines we must follow, regular hospitality and other building usage including rentals or receptions are suspended during the public health emergency (presumably through the academic/program year).

II. Shared Practices for Health & Safety

In addition to enhanced Guidelines and protocols for our staff, effective health and safety involves practices to be shared by all of us. “If in doubt, play it safe and check it out... sit the day out.” If you feel sick, please stay home.

Self-health & Temperature Checks

All persons entering the church building and school will have a temperature and self-health check, including screening for the following COVID-19 related symptoms listed below:

- A temperature >100°F (by ODJFS Guidelines)
- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- New loss of taste or smell
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Close contact risk with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 within the past 14 days or the household is currently directed to self-isolate from exposure to someone else who has been diagnosed for COVID-19.

Personal Hygiene

Everyone will be directed to apply hand sanitizer upon entering the building. Sanitary stations have positioned around the building at all entrances as well as main meeting rooms and main offices for the parish and school. Facial masks are directed to be used according to diocesan guidelines (with noted exceptions). Following updated guidance, we will utilize personal face masks for all students and parishioners (3 year-olds to adults).

Alternative Programming & Remote Shared Work

Allowances have been made to allow more remote working of program staff and operational hours of the building are restricted while remain in a public health emergency. Both the school as well as the parish will utilize a modified daily schedule which allows for staggered starts and longer periods in-between class sessions and worship times on the weekend. In addition to allowing more time for people to enter/leave the building while observing physical distancing, this also allows our facilities team to disinfect spaces between sessions / worship services.

III. COVID Health Policy

The following outlines our operational policies and procedures pertaining to the Public Health Emergency associated with coronavirus. The COVID Health Policy serves as an Addendum to the *Parent-Student Handbook* for St. Thomas Nursery School and is part of our overall *Coronavirus Health & Safety Plan* for both St. Thomas Episcopal Church and Nursery School and remains in effect while Ohio remains in public health emergency status or directed otherwise from the Ohio Department of Job & Family Services (ODJFS) which is responsible for the licensure of St. Thomas Nursery School. The parish of St. Thomas Episcopal Church remains under the guidance and Canons of the Diocese of Southern Ohio and The Episcopal Church.

- ❖ Personal health & hygiene practices are promoted by all of us and begin at home as well as at school/church. Everyone (*staff, students, families and parishioners*) will be directed to apply hand sanitizer upon entering the building. Our students will be taught appropriate handwashing practices throughout their day, including washing their hands upon arrival in the classroom, after coughing, sneezing or using a tissue, after using the bathroom, after exercise & play time, before snack time, and at the end of the day.
- ❖ Due to the public health emergency and out of an abundance of caution, no outside groups will be using the facilities or receptions held at this time; stricter security measures are in-place with restricted access to the building.
- ❖ It is always important that we help to prevent illness spread, and this year feels even more critical. If you feel sick, please stay home. Parents need to keep a child showing any signs of illness at home. *Remember, "If in doubt, play it safe and check it out... sit the day out."*
- ❖ All persons entering the church building & school will have a temperature & self-health check, including screening for designated COVID-19 related symptoms (see *Self-Health & Temperature Checks in Section II above*).
- ❖ If a person (including staff members) has a temperature of 100 degrees or higher, the person will immediately be sent home. If the person has **NOT** had close contact with someone confirmed or is probable to have COVID-19, the person can return after they have been fever-free for 24 hours.
- ❖ For our school, if a person has any of the symptoms listed above, and has **NOT** had close contact with someone confirmed or is probable to have COVID-19, the person must remain at home until the quarantine procedures recommended for the specific symptom(s) by the CDC are completed (*please see the "Communicable Disease Policy" section within The STNS Parent-Student Handbook*).
- ❖ If a person has a symptom from the list above, and **HAS HAD** close contact with a person confirmed or is probable to have COVID-19, the person is not to return until quarantine procedures for COVID-19 are completed in coordination with the local health department. *Upon recommendations from the local health department, a negative COVID-19 test result or a doctor's note would be required in order to return to school/work.*
- ❖ Any person who has tested positive for COVID-19 needs to follow quarantine procedures for COVID-19 in coordination with the local health department. If a person **HAS HAD** close contact with someone confirmed or is probable to have COVID-19, the individual is not to return until quarantine procedures for COVID-19 are completed in coordination with the local health department. *Upon recommendations from the local health department, a negative COVID-19 test result or a doctor's note would be required in order to return to school/work.*
- ❖ Following reporting guidelines, the school/parish will notify the local health department, Ohio Department of Job and Family services within 24 hours, and follow their directions and any applicable parish & diocesan protocols for all persons testing positive for COVID-19.
- ❖ Should a child become ill while at school, he/she will be quarantined in a designated room only to be used for that purpose with a STNS staff member. The room will be cleaned & disinfected immediately afterward. *Please make sure the emergency contacts listed are willing and able to pick up an ill child in as timely of manner as possible.*
- ❖ Families will be notified of any reported cases tested positive for COVID-19 or close contact concerns, while preserving the privacy of the individuals.
- ❖ For the parish, face masks are directed to be used according to diocesan guidelines (with noted exceptions). For St. Thomas Nursery School, all staff members will wear a mask at all times (*by classroom space arrangement and distance, face shields may be used in place of other cloth face mask by teachers during circle time to help with instruction*), as well as children 3 years-old +.
- ❖ Capacity controls and physical distance provisions are in-place for both the church and school. There are markers on the floor and chairs/pews directing where it is appropriate to stand/sit. Physical Distancing for the parish and school is further enhanced by smaller worship service and classroom sizes. For the 2020-2021 school year, STNS has limited the number of children in each class: there are no more than 6 children in a two-year-old in a class, no more than 2 children in the three and four-year-old classes, and no more than 2 children in the *Transitional Kindergarten Class*. This also provides a greater teacher to student ratio for our school.

- ❖ While we remain designated to be in a state of public health emergency related to Coronavirus, St. Thomas will use a graduated capacity limit with regard to public worship that is correlated to the current OPHAS level: Level 1 (Yellow) would yield up to 75% of capacity; Level 2 (Orange) would be limited to 50% of capacity while still utilizing physical distancing measures; Level 3 (Red) would be limited to 30% of capacity; Level 4 (Purple) would be limited to 10% capacity.
- ❖ Specific Guidelines for Music During COVID-19 have been developed for the parish which encompass both video recording and public worship and based on the *Guidelines for Singing during COVID-19* published by the Diocese of Southern Ohio (available at: https://episcopaliansinconnection.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Singing-guidelines_FINAL.pdf), as well as resources from The American Choral Directors Association (ACDA), The Voice Foundation (TVF) and The Association of Anglican Musicians (AAM). Guidelines include provisions for: Screening, Rehearsal Spaces, Mask usage, Hygiene, Sheet Music, Capacity, as well as Time Duration Limits for Rehearsal and Performance (Video Recording). Returning to in-person rehearsal will be on a graduated basis in correlation to the OPHAS Level.
- ❖ All worship & program spaces, classrooms, bathrooms, and “high touch” areas will be disinfected at the end of each session/service. Classroom materials and other “high touch” areas will be disinfected throughout the school day.
- ❖ Contact tracing will be coordinated for both the parish and day school. The parish will use a reservation system for worship services. For our school, attendance records (both staff and students) will be monitored for any trends, and be available for contact tracing if needed.
- ❖ Any questions you have regarding COVID-19, including health concerns / reports or other policy questions for St. Thomas Nursery School (STNS) should be directed to STNS Director, Emily Keiser (cell # 513-543-7631) and/or the parish to our Rector, The Rev. Darren Elin (cell # 513-448-7999).

We acknowledge how challenging the public health emergency related to the pandemic remains for all of us. This Health Policy along with the protocols within our overall *Coronavirus Health & Safety Plan* will help ensure that our school and parish can remain open in as safe and healthy environment as possible. As a community of faith, please know that we keep you and your family in prayer and are also here to help your family in any way we can. The clergy and our pastoral care team at the parish are ready and able to assist any of our families, so feel free to reach out through our parish office or by email at office@stthomasepiscopal.org

IV. Stewardship of Resources, Response and Oversight

COVID Safety Team

Oversight of our Health & Safety Plan is coordinated by an Executive Committee of the Vestry, composed of Jim Davis, our Sr. Warden, Jon Saxton, our Jr. Warden, Nate Prather, our Treasurer and The Rev. Darren Elin, our Rector who is also charged with the overall administration of this plan. Due to the complexity of our parish with St. Thomas Nursery School (STNS), Fr. Darren has a separate and distinct COVID Safety Team for STNS including Emily Keiser, the School Director, Alicia Stanula, our Assistant Director and two teachers, Ann Caesar and Kelly Braun.

Responding

The COVID Health Policy specifies what action to take in context to the situation. Following reporting guidelines, the school/parish will notify the local health department (and for STNS, Ohio Department of Job and Family Services) within 24 hours, and follow their directions and any applicable parish & diocesan protocols for all persons testing positive for COVID-19. The Reporting Officer for the parish is Fr. Darren and for STNS it would be Emily Keiser who, after consultation with the Fr. Darren and Executive Team, would then be directed to communicate directly with school families and staff.

Communication

Families will be notified of any reported cases tested positive for COVID-19 or close contact concerns, while preserving the privacy of the individuals. Updates to our operational status would be communicated through our website, email and STNS their interactive app. “Classroom Dojo.”

Review, Learn and Adapt

With the help of the Vestry, this plan is meant to be reviewed adapted from any updated guidelines and directives we receive, as well as best practices and our collective experience while we remain in a public health emergency.

Self-Acknowledgement of Risk Associated with COVID

While we are all anxious to resume our fuller life as a parish and school, we acknowledge that we must do so together carefully. It is our expectation that all observe our guidelines and rules for health and safety during worship and day school.

We cannot and do not guarantee the absence of risk from your presence and participation with us.