

November 6, 2020

Dear Reverend Fathers, Monsignors, Deacons, and parish staff,

I am writing to make you aware of a regathering policy adjustment, made out of concern for the physical and spiritual health of the people of our diocese, and to protect our gathering around the Eucharistic table and worshiping together through these upcoming months. This adjustment was recommended by our Regathering Team, affirmed by our medical consultants and approved by Bishop Joensen. Due to the rising COVID cases throughout the Diocese of Des Moines, the increased hospitalizations, and the anticipated difficulties that the winter season will bring, **the Diocese of Des Moines is suspending all parish and diocesan sponsored or hosted social events, beginning on November 23rd through January 10th.**

Our diocese remains in phase III of regathering, which allows for public worship and additional parish functions, but we are adjusting the policy to temporarily prohibit parish and diocesan sponsored or hosted social events. For greater clarity, this prohibition includes, but is not limited to, the following types of events:

- Events and gatherings not directly connected to faith formation or parish administration/operations. Examples of these include: staff and parishioner Christmas parties, coffee and donuts, or end of the year celebrations for various groups, such as Knights of Columbus or Rosary Society.
- Wedding receptions or funeral luncheons.
- Hall rentals to parishioners or outside groups that are for a social purpose.

Additionally, some implications of this policy include:

- Parish faith formation and administration/operations meetings and gatherings should not be serving food and drink during this time.
- When an event or meeting involves a faith formation or administrative function, and includes a social function, the social portion should be canceled.

This policy change might disrupt events that have already been planned. **If the parish has an already scheduled event that falls within this description, the event would require specific permission from the diocese to proceed.** You can seek that permission by reaching out directly to me at 515-237-5056 or at astorey@dmdiocese.org. Many

already scheduled events will need to be canceled. While this is disruptive and disappointing, it will be important to emphasize to parishioners that all parish events have been tentative during the COVID-19 pandemic, and contingent on the public health situation. The current COVID-19 situation does not allow for social events in a relatively safe manner, and thus will be canceled for a time. As previously stated, the motivation for this adjustment is to protect the physical health of our parishioners, and our spiritual health, which is nourished by the sacramental life that we celebrate together. By taking this step now, we might avoid situations where entire operations – including liturgical life – of a parish is canceled, as has already happened in a number of our parishes due to local outbreaks. While we hope for the ability to resume social gatherings on January 11th, we do recognize that the suspension may need to be extended at that time.

This policy adjustment is posted to our regathering website, and if you would like to direct parishioners to our diocesan policy you can do so by directing them here:
<https://www.dmdiocese.org/resources/worship/coronavirus/regathering>

If you have any questions or concerns please reach out to me at 515-237-5056 or astorey@dmdiocese.org. If you have an upcoming event and you are unsure if it fits this criteria, please reach out for assistance in discernment. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation with this adjustment, and for all you have done in ministry during this difficult time!

In Christ,



Adam Storey
Vice Chancellor
Marriage and Family Life Office Director