

## ***Office of the Bishop Statement on Virginia Safer at Home Phase 1***

May 11, 2020 - We know everyone is eager to gather in-person for worship and that Safer at Home Phase 1 of Virginia Forward now allows for religious organizations to gather again at reduced capacity. However, the highly infectious nature of Covid-19, the lack of available testing, the absence of an effective treatment for the disease, and the time needed to prepare for gathering again means **the Bishop's Office recommends abstaining from in-person gatherings through Safer at Home Phase 1 and possibly beyond.**

Some congregations may choose, against the recommendation of the Bishop's Office, to gather for in-person worship during Safer at Home Phase 1. If so, congregations must follow the very strict mandatory requirements detailed in Governor Northam's guidance for [Safer at Home Phase 1: Religious Services](#).

The Bishop's Office encourages congregations to use this time to fully prepare for potentially gathering in-person in future phases. The Office of the Bishop is currently developing guidance offering best practices for future phases of reopening under Governor Northam's Forward Virginia Plan. This new guidance will be released as soon as possible.

