



Points to Consider

As we prepare to move forward into the time that we all hope will be truly post-pandemic, the “Renew and Reconnect in Person” initiative offers ideas, encouragement and tools to support your parish’s unique response to the opportunities that lie ahead. This resource offers some ideas to ponder as you prepare for your parishioners to fully reconnect in person with your parish. The points below are a distillation of what many experts are saying about this time of opportunity, this time of the Holy Spirit, but not as a set of “rules.” We understand that most of you have been very attentive to the needs of your parishioners throughout this difficult time, so please use only what is helpful.

1. Frequent, warm and personal invitations are necessary to bring people back in person

We can’t expect everyone to come back on their own, and it’s important to avoid making assumptions about why they aren’t back already. Yes, some may have grown comfortable at home on Sundays, but others may still be concerned about gathering, and others may have been hurt in some way during the pandemic.

2. Take time to prayerfully plan and be intentional – don’t rush!

This is not about “picking up where we left off” and moving on quickly. There should be time to celebrate the good as well as to commemorate and grieve what we’ve experienced -- praying for those who have died and acknowledging all we have lost during this pandemic. Prayer and reflection are key for individual and community healing as we welcome and reconnect in person.

3. Recognize and build upon any good that has come from the pandemic

There is no doubt that the pandemic has pushed each of us to change and try new things. This is true for your parish (for example, virtual meetings, expanded outreach to the homebound) as well as for individuals and families (for example, more time for family meals, family prayer, reaching out to neighbors). Build on and possibly expand anything that has been good, and encourage your parishioners to do the same.

4. You will need help!

Reach out to your staff and volunteers to develop your parish plan and ask them to reach out to more people when the time comes to help bring the plans to fruition. Many are willing to serve, so don’t hesitate to call on their gifts as we return in person. (Remember your youth!)

5. Be realistic but try new ideas

Not every parish can or will want to do the same thing. That’s OK! What’s important is to reach beyond the typical pre-pandemic methods, try something new, and then trust the Holy Spirit to do great things.

6. Recognize and communicate that any plans made are fluid and flexible

If there is anything we have all learned in the past year, it is flexibility. It is important for your parishioners to (continue to) hear from you regularly and to know that you are making plans to reconnect parishioners with your parish. At the same time, it is also important to let them know that any plans made for events will have to be flexible.

7. Please know that the diocesan staff members are a ready resource and are happy to assist you. Contact Deb Bierlein at dbierlein@dioceseofsaginaw.org (989-797-6688) or Katy Pham at kpham@dioceseofsaginaw.org (989-797-6617) and they will be able to assist you or direct you to the appropriate resource.

***Always follow safety and liturgical guidelines that are in place. These can be found on the diocese or your local health department’s website.**