

Dear Members and Friends of Saints Cyril and Methodius Orthodox Church, Terryville, CT:

Today, Tuesday, December 21, 2021, a member of our Parish began feeling unwell and immediately self-administered an at-home COVID-19 rapid test, which returned a positive result. I became informed about this at 1:30 PM this afternoon. Hopefully, this person will be able to access further PCR testing to confirm or refute the results of this initial rapid antigen test. This person is doing well, and is experiencing only moderate symptoms. May they, by the grace of God, recover quickly and fully.

The person in question was in Church here in Terryville this past Sunday, December 19, 2021, for Divine Liturgy, and I heard their confession in Church here in Terryville, yesterday, Monday, December 20, 2021. Importantly, this person, when here at Church on both Sunday and Monday, was masked and maintained social distance, so this is NOT, technically speaking, a case of exposure.

Nevertheless, after consulting with the Terryville Parish Council and others, we are immediately implementing the following steps here at Church in Terryville, out of an abundance of caution and love and respect for all:

- We will keep our planned schedule of pre-Christmas, Christmas, and post-Christmas liturgical services.
- Everyone present will be masked, from the moment they enter to the moment they leave, with the exception of only the cantors, chanters, and readers, of whom there will be not many at any given service. We will not use our full Choir. (If you wish to help with the reading and chanting, please, contact me.)
- We will enforce social distancing. At Church, we are to gather in family groups, and not otherwise mingle.
- I (Fr. John) will wear a mask at all times, even while presiding at services.
- I will limit my preaching (in terms of time spent speaking), and will just provide some brief words of encouragement and exhortation at the festal services.
- Also, out of an abundance of caution (even though this is, again, technically speaking, NOT a case of exposure, since I have been wearing my mask and keeping distance when hearing confessions), I am trying to schedule or access a rapid antigen COVID test for myself for Friday morning, December 24. (Being tested sooner than that is not worthwhile, so soon after the possible, causal event.) However, despite my extensive efforts this afternoon, I can't find a pharmacy with any home test kits in stock, nor can I find a clinic that has any open appointments for testing between now and Christmas. (This is a big problem right now in our area—insufficient access to testing—I heard a lot about that today.) If I am not able to access a test, I will still be in Church, and I will be presiding at services, as long as I am symptom-free. At this time, I am feeling well.
- Finally, we encourage every person to make their own prayerful best decision about attending services this week and weekend. Some of us may decide to stay home. Others will still be eager to attend in-person worship. Any person with an existing appointment with me for Confession or pastoral counseling is free to postpone that appointment until

some easier time in the future. May the Lord God guide us to the right decisions for ourselves and for others, too. Lord, have mercy.

With love in Christ,

*Fr. John H.*

Archpriest John Hopko, Pastor