

# GUIDANCE FOR CLEANING AND DISINFECTING HOUSES OF WORSHIP 5.21.20



*Please note: This is an evolving situation and information is subject to change. We will issue updated guidance when appropriate.*

The virus that causes COVID-19 can be killed if you use the right products. The EPA has compiled a list of disinfectant products that can be used against COVID-19, including ready-to-use sprays, concentrates, and wipes. You can access the list by going to: [rcabrisk.org/cleaning-and-disinfecting](http://rcabrisk.org/cleaning-and-disinfecting)

## Maintaining Church Pews

Frequent disinfecting of church pews may result in damage to the finish. Avoid using harsh chemicals such as bleach and alcohol-based products. Mild detergent and water is best. To disinfect, the Office of Risk Management recommends **Bioesque** or **Benefect Decon 30**. Both are EPA-approved, work on all surfaces, and should not damage pews, but always do a patch test in an inconspicuous place to be sure. Benefect is difficult to source at the moment, but Bioesque can be purchased from Home Depot Pro (866-412-6726), or from local distributors such as Prospect Hill in Brockton: [www.prospecthillco.com](http://www.prospecthillco.com)

Because any cleaning material will build up after several applications, church furniture manufacturer Ratigan Schottler recommends a product by Guardsman called Wood Scent Wood Polish. This material will remove any residual cleaning agents and will leave a protective coat of wax over the finish to help maintain the beauty and durability of the finish. Doing this a couple of times a year will help to keep the pews clean and protect the finish. This product can be purchased at ACE Hardware Stores and furniture stores.

## Deep Cleaning Versus Routine Cleaning

Deep cleaning is a process that involves a thorough cleaning and disinfecting of your entire church - all the pews, floors, carpets, altar, sacristy, crying room, bathroom, etc. Thoroughly clean all areas of the church using detergent and water to remove germs, dirt, and impurities from surfaces or objects. Next, apply an EPA-registered disinfectant to frequently touched surfaces or objects for appropriate contact times as indicated on the product's label. A deep cleaning can be done by your facilities personnel, or you may hire a cleaning company. See [rcabrisk.org/cleaning-companies](http://rcabrisk.org/cleaning-companies) for a list of archdiocesan-approved companies.

## Prior to Re-Opening

**Has the area been unoccupied for the last 7 days?** If your church has been unoccupied for 7 days or more, it will only need your normal routine cleaning and disinfecting. This is because the virus that causes COVID-19 has not been shown to survive on surfaces longer than this time. It is not necessary to clean ventilation systems, other than routine maintenance, as part of reducing risk of coronaviruses.

**Establish a plan to clean and disinfect the church before and after every Mass.** Identify and train staff and volunteers who are willing to disinfect high-touch surfaces in between Masses. Examples of high-touch surfaces are doorknobs, bathrooms, railings, pews including the backs, microphones, shared instruments. Provide them with the necessary Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

For more information, please visit [CORONAVIRUS.GOV](http://CORONAVIRUS.GOV)



## GUIDANCE FOR CLEANING AND DISINFECTING PARISH CHURCHES

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**Remove soft and porous materials if possible.** You should also consider what items can be moved or removed completely to reduce frequent handling or contact from multiple people. Soft and porous materials, such as area rugs and seating, may be removed or stored to reduce the challenges with cleaning and disinfecting them. If you cannot remove pew cushions, mist them with a disinfectant, such as Bioesque, and allow to air dry.

### How to Clean

#### Cleaning Before and in Between Masses

- First, always wear gloves and a mask. Additional PPE may be required depending on the cleaning product. Please read the Safety Data Sheet (SDS) for each product you use.
- If using a combination cleaner and disinfectant, apply and follow manufacturer's directions. Many products recommend keeping the surface wet for a specific amount of time - anywhere from 4-10 minutes. Allow for this when determining how long it will take staff or volunteers to clean the church.
- If not using a combination cleaner and disinfectant, clean surfaces using soap and water prior to each day's first Mass, then disinfect using an EPA-approved disinfectant. In between Masses, disinfect only, unless the area is visibly dirty.
- Start with the pew closest to the door and begin disinfecting as soon as parishioners have left. Disinfect the entire pew, including the seat, as well as the backs of the unoccupied pews. **Remember to maintain social distancing.**

#### Reported Cases of COVID-19

**If you learn that an individual with COVID-19 attended a service or otherwise entered the place of worship,** you must conduct a deep cleaning and disinfecting as outlined earlier. Contact the Office of Risk Management for assistance: 617-746-5742.

#### A Few Important Reminders about Coronaviruses and Reducing the Risk of Exposure

- Coronaviruses on surfaces and objects naturally die within hours to days. Warmer temperatures and exposure to sunlight will reduce the time the virus survives on surfaces and objects.
- Normal routine cleaning with soap and water removes germs and dirt from surfaces. It lowers the risk of spreading COVID-19 infection.
- Disinfectants kill germs on surfaces. By killing germs on a surface after cleaning, you can further lower the risk of spreading infection. EPA-approved disinfectants are an important part of reducing the risk of exposure to COVID-19. If disinfectants on this list are in short supply, alternative disinfectants can be used (for example, 1/3 cup of bleach added to 1 gallon of water, or 70% alcohol solutions).
- **Store and use disinfectants in a responsible and appropriate manner according to the label. Do not mix bleach or other cleaning and disinfection products together--this can cause fumes that may be very dangerous to breathe in. Keep all disinfectants out of the reach of children.**

#### Outdoor Masses

Outdoor areas generally require normal routine cleaning and do not require disinfection. Spraying disinfectant on sidewalks and in parks is not an efficient use of disinfectant supplies and has not been proven to reduce the risk of COVID-19 to the public. You should maintain existing cleaning and hygiene practices for outdoor areas. The targeted use of disinfectants can be done effectively, efficiently and safely on outdoor hard surfaces and objects frequently touched by multiple people.

**If you have any questions, email: [corona@rcab.org](mailto:corona@rcab.org) or call 617-746-5750.**