

Tips for parish staff working remotely

Update your parish directory and upload it to your website

Check your parish directory to make sure your staff emails are up to date. Upload your parish directory to your website, if you haven't already done so.

Also, make sure your staff knows the correct contact person and information for each committee chair, ministry leader and key volunteer. That way, all inquiries can be forwarded to the appropriate person for prompt response.

Announce your office hours on social media, community phone call (robo-call) and via email

If the parish office is closing for a significant time, make sure you let your parishioners know on your website and through all communications offices. Make sure your message is clear and visible on your parish homepage: parishioners shouldn't have to scroll down to see the announcement. Consider using language like this:

To help protect our staff and parishioners during the coronavirus outbreak, our offices will be closed until further notice. Our staff will be working remotely during this time. If you need to contact one of our staff members, please click here <INSERT LINK> for our parish directory. If emergency sacramental care is required, please call <INSERT NUMBER>.

Consider taking this notice one step further by adding a link to your county's health service website where parishioners can get more information and read updates.

Gather all the log-ins and passwords you'll need to work from home

Many of the software programs we use today are connected to the "cloud," which allow you to have online access. Outlook, Gmail, Yahoo – all of these have online access. All you need is your username and password.

When is the last time you used your password to login to your email and other online tools? Many of us have our browsers set to automatically log us in. Do you have your passwords recorded somewhere? If not, make sure you track down your username and password for your email as well as other cloud-based systems you might be using at your parish (ParishSoft, PDS, Servant Keeper, LPi, Faith Direct, Vanco, PayPal, QuickBooks, Flocknote, Constant Contact, eCatholic, etc.).

Redirect your office phone to your cell phone, and update your voicemail message

Record an automated message for parishioners who call in to your parish, letting them know that the office is closed. Talk to your phone provider or IT director about ways to redirect calls when the office is closed. Make sure the main parish contact line is rerouted to the appropriate staff member's mobile phone or home phone.

Once this is set up, it should take minimum effort to switch over to "office closed" mode whenever needed. If your parish's phone system does not allow you to redirect calls, make sure staff members update their voicemail messages so parishioners know how to reach them. Also, it's becoming more

common for voicemails to give the instruction to “text this number for a more speedy response.” If you operate faster by text and are comfortable sharing your cell phone number, consider adding that to your voicemail message.

Use video conferencing to stay connected while working remotely

Good news! You can still see the friendly faces of your parish staff from the comfort of your own home.

There are many free or inexpensive video conferencing services that will let you collaborate with your team as if you were still in the same office. We recommend [Zoom](#), [Google Hangouts](#), or [Skype](#). If you use the free versions of these programs, be aware that there might be time limits and user limits per conference call. But the free version should be enough to get you started.

If you have a newer laptop or desktop, you should be ready to go using the internal camera and microphone. If not, here are two tools you can use to dramatically improve the sound quality of your video conferences.

1. [Jabra Bluetooth/USB conference speaker and microphone](#) (\$149)
(PSG employees all swear by this little speaker. Perfect size and works like a charm).
2. [Logitech webcam](#) (\$32)