Risk reducing measures specific to Orthodox services

The majority of measures are supported by common sense and evidence from other, similar pathogens. However, not all is known about COVID-19 and some may not ultimately be found to reduce the risk of transmission. We will not reiterate the general risk-reduction measures that many are hearing about frequently, but would recommend as many of these measures be implemented as possible to support lower risks regardless of which recommendation is taken. The more recommendations that are combined the lower the risk would be expected to be and, in many cases, would be expected to be synergistic. In addition, we would like to highlight the following risk-reducing measures specific to Orthodox services.

❖ Minimize the size of the group serving, ideally just a priest and chanter(s).
❖ Use the same group of servers for every service.
❖ If clergy, servers, or either of their families are sick in any way, no services should be held.
❖ Ideally the serving group would be only the priest’s family.
❖ Minimize interaction by scheduling separate times for each family to commune.
❖ Clergy should simply give the faithful communion and the faithful should leave, minimizing conversations. Long conversations should be held separately by phone or video conference.
❖ If possible, consider having interactions outside or provide additional ventilation if services must be held indoors (increase air from outside, open doors, open windows, use fans, etc.).
❖ In cases where there are multiple clergymen, utilize as many as available to distribute communion, minimizing the risk each individual clergyman receives from more frequent interactions with the faithful.
❖ Common food (e.g., antidoron) should be distributed by a single, healthy person preferably with a gloved hand, or excluded from distribution.
❖ Common drink (e.g., zapivka) should be distributed in individual containers placed with adequate separation that no one would contaminate an adjacent vessel while picking one up, or excluded from distribution.
❖ If possible, the faithful should consider wearing something to cover one’s face, ideally a medical mask, but, considering the needs of our first responders and healthcare workers first, one might also consider a homemade cloth mask.
❖ Everyone who wears contact lenses should wear their glasses (clergy especially), when communing or congregating any size group (even 2 or 3). Glasses are more protective than contacts because they help shield the eyes from droplets.
❖ Establish a clear flow of traffic and spacing by placing markings on the ground to minimize the length of interactions and as a reminder of appropriate social distancing.