

COVID-19

(Coronavirus)

PHASE 4

Worship Community Reopening Guidance

Intent

The intent of this guidance is to:

- a. Establish a framework for Worship Communities to safely hold congregational services and minimize the risk of transmission of the COVID-19 virus
- b. All each worship community to prepare their own risk assessment and risk management/mitigation policies.

Content

The guidance provides information on health and safety measures to be implemented in:

- i. Church Gatherings - General Approach
- ii. Christian Greetings and Physical Distancing
- iii. Correct use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- iv. Church Cleaning
- v. Hygiene/Bathroom Facilities
- vi. Communion Services and Baptisms
- vii. Church Luncheons and Agape Feasts

Church Gatherings – General Approach

When planning your approach to holding your church gatherings, PLEASE REMEMBER THE 3 C'S of staying healthy during COVID-19

1. **AVOID CROWDS**
2. **AVOID CLOSED IN OR ENCLOSED SPACES**
3. **AVOID CLOSE CONTACT**

Below are some items that must be maintained during gatherings:

- a. Face masks will be compulsory for attendees
- b. Strict attention to **PHYSIAL DISTANCING** defined as
 - i. Six feet; or
 - ii. Three feet, provided each person is wearing a mask which completely covers their nose and mouth
- c. Recommend outdoors service where practical. It may be possible to increase the numbers of attendees allowed as long as strict physical distancing is in force, use of masks is enforced and it is well marshaled.
- d. Use Church Wardens/Deacons to control all aspects in the church plan
 - i. Directing traffic flow and car parking
 - ii. Queuing outside church with strict physical distancing
 - iii. Control choke points inside the church – to be avoided
 - iv. Exiting from church –planning required
 - v. Children in church of all ages physical distancing concerns
- e. Ensure the use of multiple doors to minimize choke points for people entering and exiting the buildings safe plans considering general fire and safety concerns as well
- f. Consider offering multiple services to allow more people to attend



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- g. If multiple services is a chosen option, have adequate time gap between services to allow for:
 - vi. Congregation to leave
 - vii. Cleaning/sanitizing seats/equipment to take place
 - viii. Next congregation arriving
- h. The elderly and those with medical conditions are especially vulnerable to COVID-19. Consider special services for these groups to protect them.
- i. If separate services are held for seniors/vulnerable persons these should occur first before other services of the day. Viral particles can linger in aerosols in air so those services should precede, not follow other services. The more time allowed between services generally the better i.e. early morning service followed by lunch time service followed by evening service is better than services at 8am, 10am, and 11:30am. Any ventilation to outdoors that can happen by opening doors and windows between services would be ideal as well. Please think long and hard before exposing our seniors and vulnerable members to high risks.
- j. Singing does project the respiratory water droplets in your breath and together with choirs and wind instruments are not recommended in this phase at all.
- k. Items that will be touched i.e. donation platters – essential sanitizing and use of containers
- l. Would also recommend against use of shared hymnals/bibles/books. Recommend use of multimedia projector screen with relevant passages to refer to or encourage people to bring their own.

Christian Greetings & Physical Distancing

- a. This must involve using every other pew and have families (from the same household) sitting in accordance with physical distancing guidelines from the next family group.

- b. Ensure congregants of separate households **AVOID** handshakes, hugs, kisses and/or holding hands, at this present time, which is common during prayer.
- c. Church/Faith leader to give verbal announcements about hand hygiene and the need for continued physical distancing during the gathering.
- d. Hand hygiene and physical distancing requirements should be placed in church bulletins.

Correct use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- a. Every person attending the church gathering **MUST** wear a face mask for the entire duration of time they attend the church gathering, covering their mouth and nose.
- b. No other PPE is recommended at this time.
- c. Thermometers to be used before everyone enters the buildings. It would be ideal if a nurse is available with a digital thermometer; otherwise, control access and have large signs asking every congregant not to enter the service if they have any symptoms at all or not feeling well- this is in the interests of their community and brethren.

Church Cleaning

- a. Ensure that a thorough cleaning with antibacterial cleaning cloths is undertaken throughout the church giving specific attention to door handles, pews, church rails, light switches and all bathroom and kitchen surfaces and meeting places.
- b. Have a thorough cleaning of all surfaces outlined above between services.
- c. Ensure bathrooms are monitored with only one person being allowed into the bathroom at a time and facilities are regularly cleaned
- d. Ensure bathrooms are thoroughly cleaned between services.



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Hygiene/Bathroom Facilities

- a. Hand sanitizer stations must be at each entry point
- b. Signage at certain locations must be in place to reinforce the rules
- c. Consider activities that may need to change
- d. Ensure hot running water is available in all bathrooms and kitchens for use during the gathering.
- e. Ensure liquid hand soap is available in all bathrooms and kitchens for use during the gathering.
- f. Ensure paper towel and toilet paper via dispenser(s) are available for use during the gathering.
- g. Remind all congregants to wash hands with soap and water for 20 seconds before drying thoroughly.
- h. Encourage congregants to use disposable paper when touching toilet handles, bathroom taps, and when opening bathroom doors.
- i. Ensure trash bins are available, regularly cleaned and emptied during the gathering and available for people to open the doors using the paper towels.
- j. Ensure no one feeling unwell enters the buildings
- k. Ensure tissues are readily available to catch coughs, sneezes and for nose wiping.
- l. Ensure trash bins are available to collect used tissues throughout the church.
- m. Promote the use of knuckles to operate light switches if concerns arise.
- n. Promote the opening of doors with elbows or tissues if concerns arise.

Communion Services and Baptisms

Permitted with appropriate health measures in place.

Church Luncheons and Agape Feasts

At this present time and phase, luncheons and feasts cannot be recommended or sanctioned in the best interests of the community.

However, a plan should be developed later to identify what risk mitigation steps should be taken in the future. The plan should include:

- a. When serving food, disposable cutlery pre-wrapped in napkins must be used. Uncovered cutlery in open baskets must be avoided.
- b. Food handlers and servers must use clean gloves when handling and serving food along with face masks. All food and drink to be consumed outdoors as per restaurant guidance.
- c. Drinking cups along with plates etc. must be placed on the dining tables in advance of persons sitting at the tables.
- d. Drink containers must be covered if being placed on the table for further use.
- e. A clean/new pair of disposable gloves must be used when serving food and beverages.
- f. Food must be served to each table.
- g. Physical Distancing protocols of maintaining a six feet distance must be observed at the tables.
- h. All other Sabbath services and prayer meeting services will air on TV or the Internet.

Thank you for your patience, co-operation, and understanding.

