
If You Haven't Already Done So:

- Get decision-making leaders together to be on the same page.
- Learn about the virus to help inform decisions. Don't let fear drive decisions; there is a lot of false information out there.
- Remember, people are looking for ways to be safe and ways to help others. How you communicate with your congregation is as important as what you communicate.

People will need to be reminded that God is their refuge, strength, and an ever-present help in times of trouble. Your congregation will want to know there is a plan and to be reassured that you are taking their health needs seriously.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- What does our cleaning/sanitation process currently look like?
 - Are all our frequently touched surfaces involved in the cleaning process? (*i.e., doors, handles, water fountains, tables, sinks, check-in stations, touchscreens, children's areas including toys, etc.*)
 - Do we need to take extra cleaning measures?
- What will we need to do about service elements?
 - Will we stop having communion during this time?
 - Will we stop passing the offering buckets/plates (*if applicable*)?
 - Will we stop passing out bulletins/programs (*if applicable*)?
 - Will we stop doing a greeting time (*if applicable*)?
- Are we asking our volunteers/door greeters/welcome teams to refrain from shaking hands?
 - Are we asking them to wash their hands frequently?
 - Do we refrain from offering coffee or other treats during this time?
 - Are we visibly doing things that help people see cleanliness? (*i.e., putting out hand sanitizer stations, having staff/volunteers wipe surfaces while people are around*)
 - Do you take attendance of kids and volunteers in case you need to reach out to a group that was around that individual who was recently diagnosed?
 - What would cause us to have to cancel services? Do local health office recommendations have an impact on our decision making?
 - Where are we posting our closures? (*i.e., building signage, local news, phone messages, email, social media, website*)
 - What are we doing to encourage our congregation not to live in fear?
 - What opportunities do we have to help our local communities?
 - What are we doing to help people who are staying home to stay engaged with our church? (*i.e., livestream, digital content, phone calls*)

We suggest you follow and share with your congregations the health guideline suggested by The Centers of Disease Control www.cdc.gov and the Ohio Department of Health www.odh.ohio.gov.

COMMUNICATIONS

DETERMINE AHEAD OF TIME WHAT COMMUNICATION CHANNELS YOU WILL USE.

If the Coronavirus was just discovered in your area, we recommend letting your congregation know that you are aware of it and are keeping an eye on it. You want them to feel safe and to know that there is thought behind it. Your email/social media post may include:

- We want to care for our congregation in all aspects including the physical well-being of our community. We are asking you to take precautions to keep yourself and others safe especially during recent developments with the flu and the Coronavirus.
- We recommend letting your congregation know your plan of action and expectations. It's also vital that you allow them to feel heard in this communication.
- We recommend your pastors or hosts acknowledge the crisis from the pulpit/stage.
- We recommend looking for ways to make an impact in your community during this crisis.
- Encourage congregants to pray for those impacted by the virus and for health care professionals caring for the sick.
- Staff communication: Always let the staff know your plans and ask questions before anyone else. Inform/update staff of policies/closures
- What does it look like for staff to work remotely? What does PTO/Sick Time look like?
- Who is the point person for communication? Be consistent and clear.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

COMMUNION

- The fewer hands that touch the elements, the better. Consider the following options:
 - Dip and serve: Pastor/Communion Stewards use pre-cut bread, dip into the cup and hand to the congregation members.
 - Consider using individual cups that can be served without hand-to-hand transmission.
 - Churches should take special care to disinfect tiny communion cups or use single-use cups. Compostable cups are also available.

BAPTISM

Baptisms themselves can be done if none of the participants are infected.

GREETING/PASSING THE PEACE

Public Health officials recommend 4-6 feet from person to person in an enclosed space. Try placing your hand over your heart as a sign of Christian love or folding your hands over your heart and then opening them palms out and down toward another person — in a sign of connection, rather than palms out and up, which might indicate separation.

PASSING THE OFFERING PLATE

Consider having stationary baskets or collection plates at the entrances or on the altar. This would be a great time to set up online giving.

CLEANING

- Bleach is recommended for disinfecting durable surfaces. Anything that causes bubbles destroys germs. “If it suds, it strips.”
- Children’s toys and other durable surfaces in classrooms or nurseries should be disinfected often. Toys with fur or fabric (stuffed animals, etc.) should not be used during this season.
- Clean your phone after church at the same time you wash your hands. We touch our phones a LOT.

FOOD SERVICE

For coffee hour food service or potlucks, tongs or spoons should be made available so that the actual food is not contaminated by fingers in the food, with resting areas outside of the food for those tongs or utensils. But before you sit down and consume, you should wash or disinfect your hands. Treat tongs like doorknobs: use them but wash your hands afterwards. Here’s more food service best practices and consider posting volunteers to assist guests with best practices too.

MULTI-USE SPACES

Do thorough cleaning between uses of a multi-use space.

STAFF POLICIES AND TELECOMMUTING POSSIBILITIES

Church Staff should pre-emptively figure out how to accomplish as much of their jobs as possible remotely. Install remote desktop software with secure practices, put documents (securely) in the cloud via Dropbox or OneDrive or Google Drive. Human Resource church committees should set expectations of what they want staff to do in case of feeling sick, fear of getting sick, or a potential shutdown so that as much ministry coordination as possible can happen remotely.

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