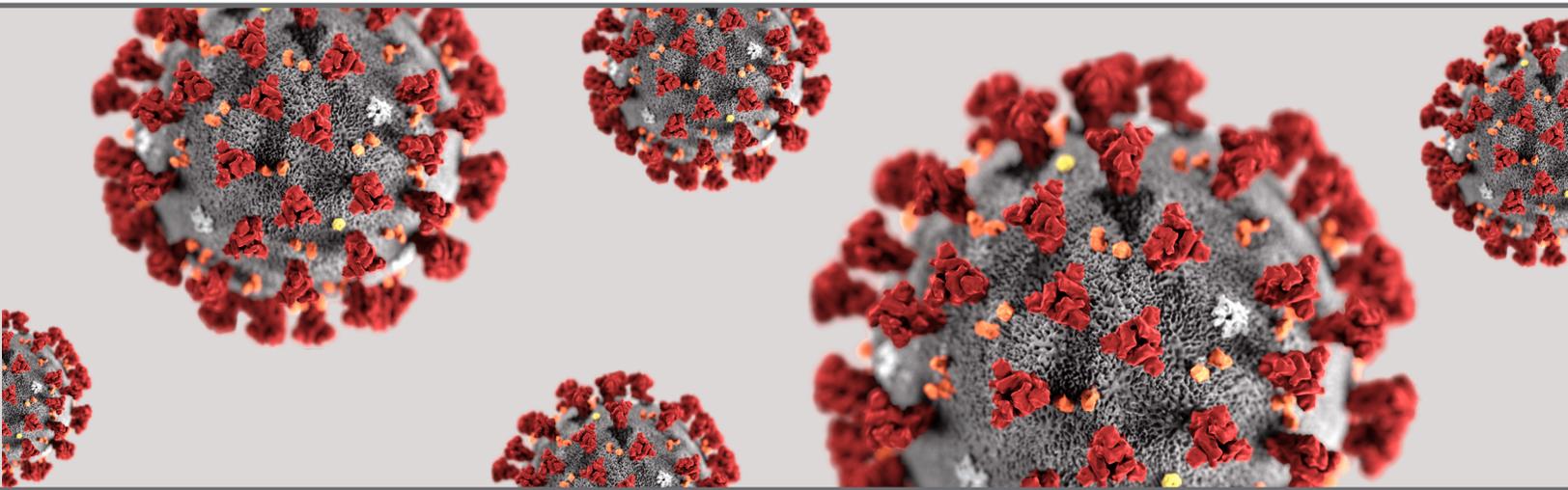
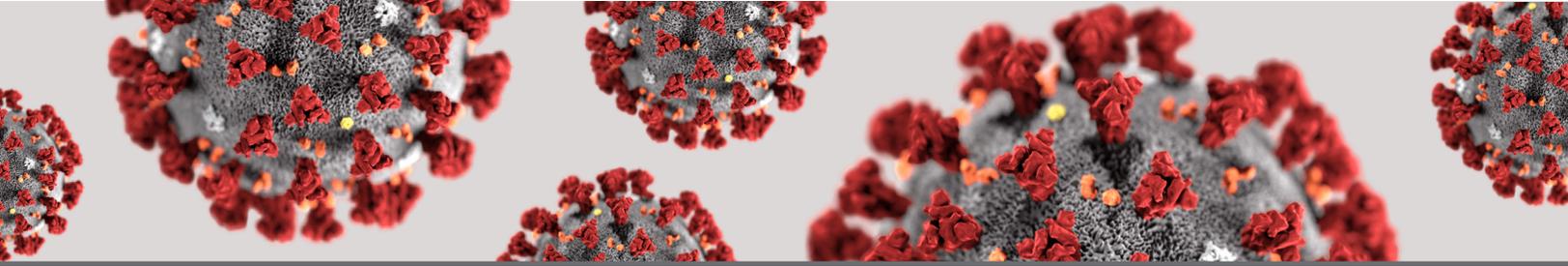


COVID-19 CHURCH TOOLKIT



A guide to holding worship services during a pandemic



In an effort to help protect the community from COVID-19, the Mid-Michigan District Health Department strongly encourages places of worship to remain closed until the Governor approves large gatherings. When deciding to open, places of worship will find the following Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations helpful.

PROMOTE HEALTHY HYGIENE PRACTICES

- Encourage staff and congregants to maintain good hand hygiene, [washing hands](#) with soap and water often for at least 20 seconds.
- Have adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors, including soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol (for those who can safely use hand sanitizer), tissues, and no-touch trash cans.
- Encourage staff and congregants to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or use the inside of their elbow. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash and hands washed.
- Whenever soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol can be used.
- Consider posting signs on how to [stop the spread](#) of COVID-19 and how to [promote everyday protective measures](#), such as [washing hands](#), covering coughs and sneezes, and [properly wearing a face covering](#).

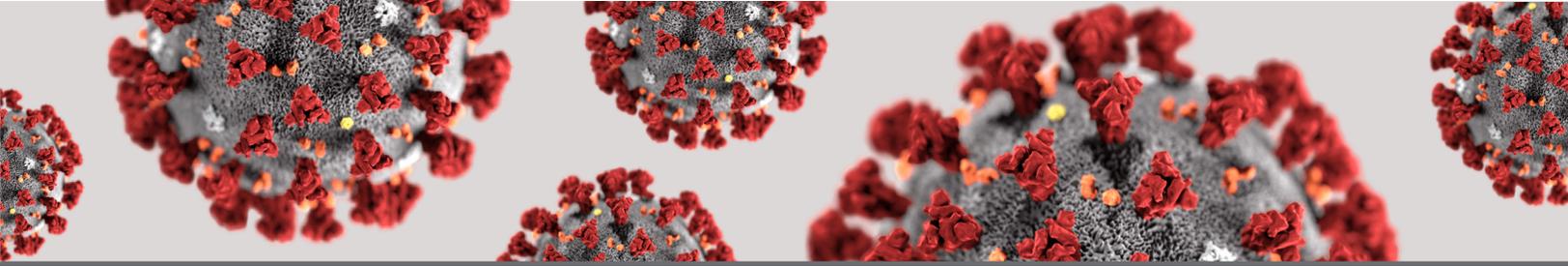
CLOTH FACE COVERINGS

Encourage use of [cloth face coverings](#) among staff and congregants. Face coverings are most essential when social distancing is difficult. Note: Cloth face coverings should not be placed on children younger than 2 years old, anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious, and anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cloth face covering without assistance. Cloth face coverings are meant to protect other people in case the wearer is unknowingly infected but does not have symptoms.

[Instructions on how to make a homemade cloth face covering](#) and how to properly [wear a face covering](#) can be found on the CDC website.

INTENSIFY CLEANING, DISINFECTION, AND VENTILATION

- [Clean and disinfect](#) frequently touched surfaces at least daily and shared objects in between uses.
- Develop a schedule of increased, routine cleaning and disinfection.
- Avoid use of items that are not easily cleaned, sanitized, or disinfected.
- Ensure [safe and correct application of disinfectants](#) and keep them away from children.
- Cleaning products should not be used near children, and staff should ensure that there is adequate ventilation when using these products to prevent children or themselves from inhaling toxic fumes.



- Ensure that ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows and doors, using fans, etc. Do not open windows and doors if they pose a safety risk to children using the facility.
- If your faith community offers multiple services, consider scheduling services far enough apart to allow time for cleaning and disinfecting high-touch surfaces between services. [Take steps](#) to ensure that all water systems and features (for example, drinking fountains, decorative fountains) are safe to use after a prolonged facility shutdown to minimize the risk of Legionnaires' disease and other diseases associated with water.

PROMOTE PHYSICAL DISTANCING

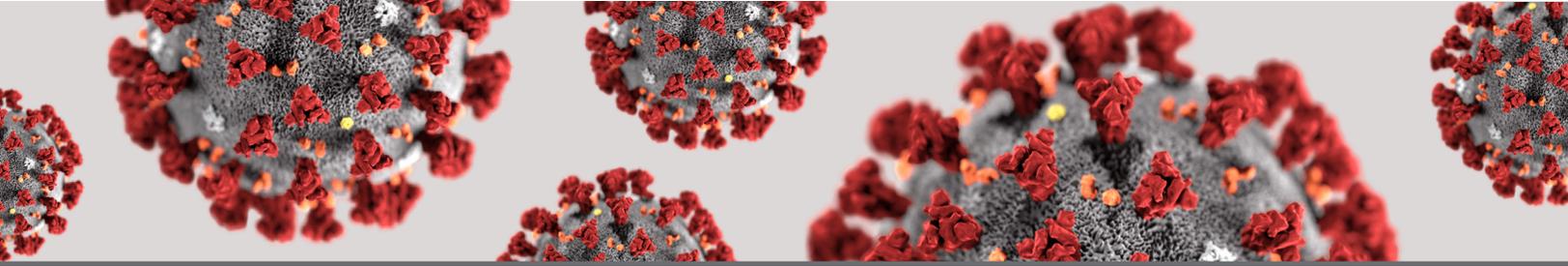
- Take steps to limit the size of gatherings in accordance with the guidance and directives of state and local authorities and subject to the protections of the First Amendment and any other applicable federal law.
- Promote physical distancing at services and other gatherings, ensuring that clergy, staff, choir, volunteers and attendees at the services follow social distancing, as circumstances and faith traditions allow, to lessen their risk.
- Consider holding services and gatherings in a large, well-ventilated area or outdoors, as circumstances and faith traditions allow.
- Consider offering virtual services so those who are at high risk (older adults and people of all age with certain underlying medical conditions) for COVID-19 infection, or those who otherwise choose not to attend in person can still take part.
- Consider appropriate mitigation measures, including taking steps to limit the size of gatherings maintaining physical distancing, at other gatherings such as funerals, weddings, religious education classes, youth events, support groups and any other programming, where consistent with the faith tradition.
- Provide physical guides, such as tape on floors or walkways and signs on walls, to ensure that staff and children remain at least 6 feet apart in lines and at other times (e.g. guides for creating "one-way routes" in hallways).

PHYSICAL DISTANCING

Limiting face-to-face contact with others is the best way to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Since people can spread the virus before they know they are sick, it is important to stay away from others when possible, even if you- or they- have no symptoms. Physical distancing is especially important for those who are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

Physical distancing means keeping space between yourself and other people outside of your home. To practice physical distancing:

- Stay at least 6 feet (about 2 arms' length) from other people in outdoor and indoor spaces.
- Do not gather in groups
- Stay out of crowded places
- Avoid mass gatherings



TAKE STEPS TO MINIMIZE COMMUNITY SHARING OF WORSHIP MATERIALS AND OTHER ITEMS

- Consistent with the community's faith tradition, consider temporarily limiting the sharing of frequently touched objects, such as worship aids, prayer rugs, prayer books, hymnals, religious texts and other bulletins, books, or other items passed or shared among congregants, and encouraging congregants to bring their own such items, if possible, or photocopying or projecting prayers, songs, and texts using electronic means.
- Modify the methods used to receive financial contributions. Consider a stationary collection box or electronic methods of collecting financial contributions instead of shared collection trays or baskets.
- Consider whether physical contact (e.g., shaking hands, hugging, or kissing) can be limited.
- If food is offered at any event, consider pre-packaged options, and avoid buffet or family-style meals if possible.

NURSERY/CHILDCARE

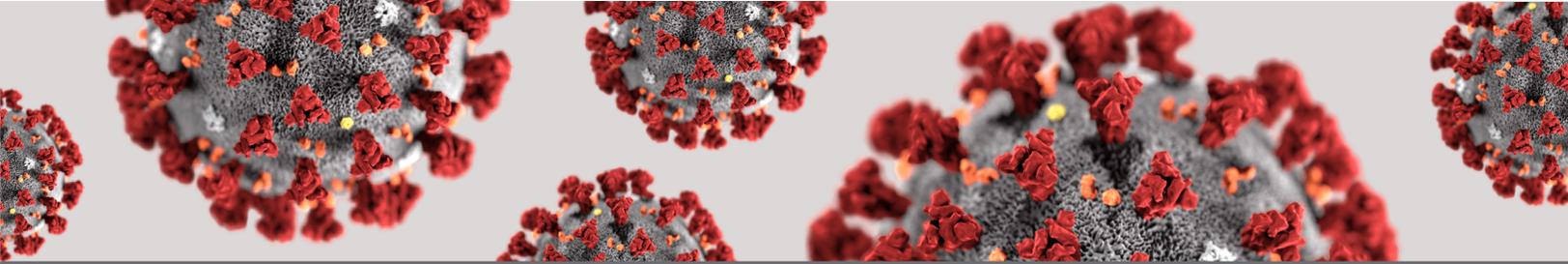
- If a nursery or childcare will be provided during services and events, refer to CDC's information on [preventing the spread of COVID-19 in childcare settings](#) and adapt as needed for your setting.
- If holding summer day camps, refer to CDC's information on [youth and summer camps](#) and adapt as needed.

WHAT TO DO IF SOMEONE IN YOUR FACILITY HAS BEEN DIAGNOSED WITH COVID-19

- Notify your Local Public Health Department if a person diagnosed with COVID-19 has been in your facility and communicate with staff and congregants about potential exposure while maintaining confidentiality as required by the [Americans with Disability Act \(ADA\)](#).
- Inform those who may have been exposed that the Health Department may be contacting them to see if they need to stay home and self-monitor for symptoms.
- Close off areas used by the sick person and do not use the area until after cleaning and disinfection.
- Advise staff and congregants with symptoms or who have tested positive for COVID-19 not to return to your facility until they have been instructed to do so by their Local Public Health Department.

CHECK FOR SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Encourage staff or congregants who are sick or who have had close contact with a person with COVID-19 to stay home.
- Share CDC's criteria for staying home with staff and congregants so that they know how to care for themselves and others. Consider posting signs at entrances with this information.
- Screen for COVID-19 symptoms before allowing staff or congregants to enter the building.



SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19

Symptoms of COVID-19 may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. People with the following symptoms may have COVID-19:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

STAFFING AND TRAINING

- Train all clergy and staff in the above safety actions. Consider conducting the training virtually, or, if in-person, ensure that social distancing is maintained.

SUGGESTIONS FROM OTHER CHURCHES

- Place hand sanitizer throughout the building and at exit doors.
- Remove any pew bibles, song books or pew cushions.
- Rope off every other pew to help achieve 6' distance.
- Mark off 6' distances on sidewalks leading up to entrance doors to prevent bottlenecking as people wait to enter the church.
- Everyone comes in one door and that door stays open (no hand touching).
- Congregants are asked to remain seated during the service, if possible.
- All possessions remain with congregants -no hanging of coats or leaving personal items unattended.
- Have a greeter count the number of people entering the church. Shut and lock all doors once 50 people have entered. Post a sign on the door, letting people know that the service is full and to come back for an additional service, if one is available, or to watch the service online.
- Place a box at the entrance to the sanctuary for the offering instead of passing a collection plate.
- Once the service is complete, have a greeter dismiss one row at a time and don't dismiss the next row until all people have exited the sanctuary and the building.
- Once everyone leaves, clean and disinfect the building.

Visit the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) website for additional guidance.

Visit [Michigan Department of Health and Human Services](#) (MDHHS) website for State updates.

Visit [Mid-Michigan District Health Department](#) for local updates.