

**UNION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
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(As of 8-25-2020  
reviewed by Attorney Charles Stopp)

# **COVID-19 GUIDANCE PLAN FOR REOPENING**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

There appears no way to ensure that individuals have zero risk of Covid-19 infection, so it is important to understand the risks reported by various public health sources, and know how (based on the available guidance) to be as safe as possible. In general, the more people one interacts with, the more closely one interacts with others, and the longer that interaction occurs, the higher risk of contracting and spreading Covid-19.

### **Purpose**

This document outlines the strategy to reopen Union Lutheran Church amid the Covid-19 pandemic. It relies on guidance from the ELCA, CDC and PA guidelines to worship as safely as possible. Know that this document may not be exhaustive as the medical and scientific community continues to discover new and changing matters pertaining to Covid-19. All are encouraged to become aware of updated guidance to assist all in managing their affairs in this regard. The Church is not an expert in this field.

### **PA Green Phase**

On June 26, 2020, Lehigh County went to the Green Phase of reopening. As of July 3, all counties in PA are in the Green Phase. The Green Phase eases most stay-at-home restrictions and business closure restrictions. All are still required to wear face masks in public and follow CDC and DOH guidance for social distancing and cleaning <sup>(1)</sup>.

## **PREVENTION STRATEGIES**

### **Indoor -vs- Outdoor**

It appears, Scientists analyzed coronavirus cases in Japan and found patients were 19 times more likely to catch the virus indoors, compared to an open-air environment.<sup>(2)</sup> There is growing evidence that the virus can spread indoors through aerosols that linger in the air and can be infectious even in smaller quantities than previously thought<sup>(8)</sup>. If meeting indoors, do what can be done to increase ventilation (for example, open windows or doors). Indoor areas require more cleaning and disinfecting.

Outdoor areas generally require normal routine cleaning and do not require disinfection. Spraying disinfectant on sidewalks and in parks is not an efficient use of disinfecting supplies and such appears has not been proven to reduce the risk of Covid-19<sup>(3)</sup>.

## Physical Distancing

For any gathering space, it is advisable to determine if it is large enough to accommodate physical distancing. People should keep 6 feet apart. People from the same household can be in groups together and don't need to be 6 feet apart from each other.<sup>(4)</sup> Based on physical distancing restrictions, the following table shows the capacity of the church building.

Area	Maximum People
Sanctuary	114*
Gathering Space	9
Upstairs Men's Room	3
Upstairs Women's Room	3
Family Life Center	35
Downstairs Men's Room	3
Downstairs Women's Room	3

\*estimated number of worshippers if all physical distancing seating areas are filled to maximum capacity (ie. seating space for 4 has 4 same family members instead of just 2 same family members).

In addition to physical distance, certain areas of the church will be restricted to everyone but the church staff. By limiting people's movements in the church, sanitizing will be less of a burden.

People should enter through the set of double doors on the right of the entrance and leave through the set of double doors on the left. Using a separate entrance and exit keep people from entering and exiting the same doorway at the same time.

Consider to start seating at least 16 feet away from where worship leaders are likely to be since they may sometimes need to use louder voices.<sup>(5)</sup>

## Sanitizing the Church

Consider removing items in common areas to avoid the burden of sanitizing them, especially soft and porous materials that are difficult to disinfect. This should include paper items like hymnals and bibles. Determine what needs to be cleaned before and after gatherings. Routinely clean objects that are often touched, like door knobs, light switches, bathroom stalls and faucets. Consider propping doors open, like bathroom doors, to avoid touching the handles.

## Face Masks/Coverings

Cloth face coverings may slow the spread of the virus and help people who may have the virus and do not know it from transmitting it to others.<sup>(4)</sup> Everyone entering the church building or attending outside gatherings must wear a face mask. The face mask should cover the nose and mouth. Children under 2, those with breathing problems, and those who are unable to remove a mask on their own should not wear face coverings. If one cannot wear a mask because of medical

or health reasons, one should consider the risk of Covid-19 exposure before attending a church service, and consider the risk to others of not wearing a mask. If someone does not have a mask, one will be provided or made available.

### **Hand Sanitizing**

Wash hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer, especially after touching frequently used items or surfaces. Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands. Hand sanitizer will be available upon entering and exiting the church gathering space. No-touch paper towel dispensers are in the bathrooms and no-touch trash cans are available.

It is recommend that worship leaders disinfect their hands in full sight of the congregation to help the congregation feel at ease about things the leaders will touch. If it is done with clear intention and openly (but not awkwardly), the act will communicate to the congregation, "This matters!"<sup>(5)</sup>

### **Supplies on Hand**

- Soap/hand sanitizer
- Cleaners/disinfectants
- Tissues
- Extra trash cans
- Face masks for guests
- Gloves for cleaners/chemicals

### **Food and Drink**

The Church will not be serving refreshments before or after the service. Please bring one's own food and drink, if needed. The water fountains will not be available and the kitchen will be closed for large gatherings. Requests for using the kitchen will be considered on a case by case basis.

### **Common Church Practices to Avoid**

Avoid practices known to spread the virus more widely, such as congregational or choral singing, unison speaking, speaking loudly, shouting, and playing wind and brass instruments.

## **COVID-19 VIRUS**

### **Symptoms**

People with Covid-19 have had a wide range of symptoms reported – ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. These symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. <sup>(1)</sup> Symptoms include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Diarrhea
- Chills
- Repeated shaking with chills
- Muscle pain
- Headache
- Sore throat
- New loss of taste or smell

### **What to Do If You Feel Sick**

Stay at home if you are sick, and self-quarantine if you think you may have been exposed to someone with COVID-19<sup>(5)</sup> for 14 days.

### **Covid-19 Case**

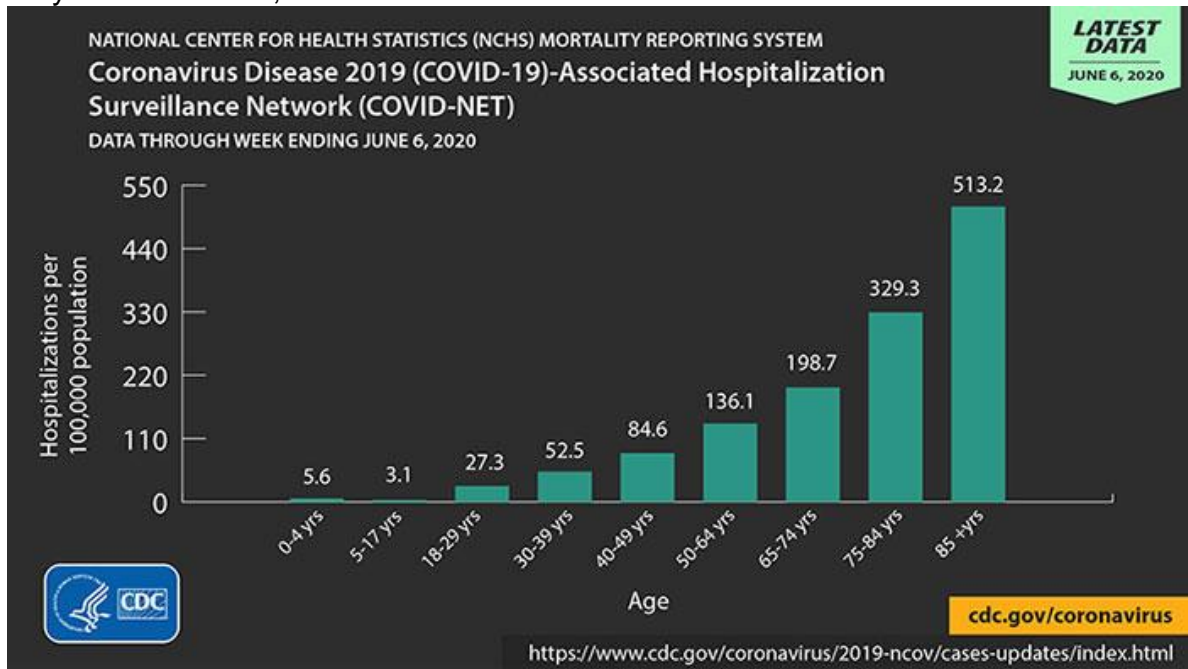
If you think someone on the staff or a person who has been in the church facility might be sick with Covid-19:

- Send the sick person home right away or separate them from others. Identify a space that can be used to separate sick people. Give them a clean face mask to cover coughs and sneezes.
- Do not use public transportation, shared rides or taxis to transport the person home.
- Contact emergency services for those who need emergency care, when needed, and report the person's symptoms.
- Communicate with staff, members and volunteers about possible exposure to the virus.
- Clean and disinfect areas where a person with suspected or confirmed Covid-19 has visited.

## People at Higher Risk of Severe Illness from Covid-19

Older adults and people (of any age) with underlying medical conditions are at increased risk for severe illness from Covid-19. By understanding the factors that put you at an increased risk, you can make decisions about what kind of precautions to take in your daily life.

8 out of 10 Covid-19 deaths reported in the United States have been among adults 65 years and older,<sup>(4)</sup>



## Update chart before issuing

People of any age with the following conditions *are* at increased risk of severe illness from Covid-19<sup>(6)</sup>:

- Chronic kidney disease
- COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)
- Immunocompromised state (weakened immune system) from solid organ transplant
- Obesity (body mass index [BMI] of 30 or higher)
- Serious heart conditions, such as heart failure, coronary artery disease, or cardiomyopathies
- Sickle cell disease
- Type 2 diabetes mellitus

## COMMUNICATION

### Covid-19 Church Contact

Designate a staff person responsible for responding to Covid-19 concerns. Members should know who this person is and how to contact them if they become sick or are around others who are diagnosed with Covid-19.<sup>(7)</sup> The table below shows who to contact with Covid-19 concerns. Any personal and/or health information will be kept confidential.

Church Office	610-767-6884	<a href="mailto:office@ulclv.org">office@ulclv.org</a>
Pastor Gordon Camp	610-554-8061	<a href="mailto:pastor@ulclv.org">pastor@ulclv.org</a>

### Communication Equipment

Communicate to anyone using the facility if you need to adjust operations. Communicate to anyone entering the facility about Covid-19 concerns. Below is a list of communication tools available to the church.

- Email
- Phone/text
- Posters – Stay home when sick, How to avoid spreading Covid-19
- Floor markings showing 6 feet apart
- Monitor in Gathering Space
- YouTube communication for instructions
- Mail
- Notes taped to the entrance doors

### Visitors/Members Who May Have Covid-19 after Visiting the Church

Visitors who later suspect they have Covid-19 should contact the church and let the Pastor know. Information will be kept confidential. Tests usually take days before results come back. “Pastor, I was tested this morning. I will let you know when the results come back...” Visitors who later suspect they were in close contact with someone with Covid-19 should quarantine for 14 days and let the church know.

### Letting People Know if a Confirmed Case Entered the Church

If someone with a confirmed case entered the building, or interacted with others one should notify the staff and congregants who may have been exposed to Covid-19 so advise with respect to same can be imparted.<sup>(7)</sup>

### National Distress Hotline

Encourage staff and congregants to talk with people they trust about their concerns and how they are feeling. Consider posting signs displaying the national distress hotline: 1-800-985-5990, or text TalkWithUs to 66746.<sup>(7)</sup>

## REFERENCES

- (1) PA Covid-19 website  
<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx>
- (2) <https://www.winknews.com/2020/06/29/study-shows-patients-were-19-times-more-likely-to-catch-coronavirus-indoors-vs-outdoors/>
- (3) CDC Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html>
- (4) CDC Older Adults <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/older-adults.html>
- (5) Resuming Care-Filled Worship and Sacramental Life During a Pandemic
- (6) CDC Underlying Medical Conditions <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-with-medical-conditions.html>
- (7) CDC Checklist for Communities of Faith  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/checklist.html>
- (8) [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/coronavirus-airborne-spread-world-health-organization/2020/07/05/9de19c38-bed8-11ea-b4f6-cb39cd8940fb\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/coronavirus-airborne-spread-world-health-organization/2020/07/05/9de19c38-bed8-11ea-b4f6-cb39cd8940fb_story.html)