

MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH

COVID-19 HEALTH AND SAFETY RESPONSE PLAN

In compliance with State of Washington Faith-Based Organization COVID-19 Requirements dated May 27, 2020

Remember that “you are called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as opportunities for self-indulgence, but become servants to one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’”

Galatians 5:13-14

ORGANIZATION COVID ADVISORS:	Chuck Harris, Senior Pastor (206) 245-8626 Pam Downing, Finance Coordinator (206) 799-3130
CURRENT PHASE:	<u>PHASE 2 as of June 20, 2020</u>
PHASE HISTORY:	PHASE 1 May 19, 2020 – June 19, 2020 STAY HOME STAY SAFE March 16, 2020 – May 18, 2020

CURRENT STATE RECOMMENDATION:

Spiritual worship should continue to be done remotely or at a drive-in service. But if spiritual worship must be done in-person, the following requirements must be employed:

- Phase 1 Hold outdoor services on the organization’s property with up to 100 individuals, excluding organization staff, so long as six feet physical distancing can be maintained.
- Phase 2 Hold indoor services at a place of worship with up to 25% capacity or 200 individuals, whichever is less, excluding organization staff, so long as six feet physical distancing can be maintained. Hold or provide in-home services or counseling inside a person’s residence with up to 5 total individuals, excluding organization staff.

- *Volunteers are included in the maximum number of permissible individuals.*
- *The services covered in these operational guidelines include all worship services, religious study classes, religious ceremonies, religious holiday celebrations, weddings, and funerals.*

MESSIAH’S COVID HEALTH AND SAFETY PLAN:

This Plan is created in compliance with State of Washington and King County COVID-19 reopening requirements for Faith-Based Organizations and will be updated regularly as guidance from these governing agencies is provided.

All staff, volunteers, and lessee church leaders will be familiar with this Plan and must set a good example by following this plan. Messiah staff will communicate regularly with volunteers and lessee church leaders to ensure all use of Messiah’s building complies with current guidelines at all times.

Mission

During this time of Covid-19 Pandemic, Messiah commits itself to continue to find new and creative ways to live out our Guiding Vision, Signature Verse, and Mission. We will continue to evolve our life and practices to **create** a culture of welcome, **develop** relationships with community partners, **provide** ways to live into God's call for us, and **cultivate** opportunities to grow in faith.

Messiah will continue to maintain a conservative approach to reopening the building and increasing in-person activities. As State and County guidelines change, Messiah will delay implementation of new phase guidance by at least a minimum of two weeks to allow ample time to review and establish a safe implementation plan.

Based on written materials provided by the ELCA Churchwide Headquarters, various ELCA synods and congregations, Messiah's insurance company (Church Mutual), and conversations among pastors, deacons, church staff members (including Messiah's staff), and lay members of congregations, the following recommendations for re-opening and utilizing the building are presented.

The recommendations are broken out into various categories of congregational life and operations. These recommendations focus on timing, policy, and procedure within a framework approved by the Messiah Church Council.

Guidance

Messiah does not need to work alone as it responds to the Covid-19 Pandemic. In determining how and when to re-open Messiah both programmatically and operationally, Messiah will thoughtfully be guided by the following:

- Scripture and our own Lutheran Tradition
- CDC Recommendations
- WA Governor Jay Inslee's Safe Start Washington Plans and Guidance
- King County Public Health Guidance and Resources
- ELCA Churchwide and Synodical Instruction and Guidance
- Church Mutual Instruction and Guidance
- Continuing Conversation among Church Leaders and Members

Communication

Messiah Lutheran will communicate with its members, friends, and neighbors evolving policies, procedures, and guidelines on at least a weekly basis. This communication will take place through the following means:

- Physical posting of necessary information to enter the building on all entryways.
- Overall guidelines for programs and operations posted on Messiah's website and social media
- Articles describing and communicating current guidelines and practices via Constant Contact
- Video chats describing and updating current Messiah guidelines and practices
- Written material mailed to members without internet access
- Announcements during worship service broadcasts

Building Use and Hours of Operation

As Washington State continues the re-opening process, Messiah is working to provide as clean and safe an environment within its building as possible. As more people utilize the building, stricter policies and procedures for building use are required to maintain safety.

- At this time, Messiah's building remains closed, except for the times and situations mentioned below. No one should be in the building except as mentioned below.
- To ensure safety and cleanliness, the church outer doors were rekeyed to restrict access to the building.

- Sunday and Thursday community meals volunteers, along with Wednesday Foodbank volunteers, were given new keys to access the building during their community service activities.
- Even though Phase 2 in Washington State began on June 20th, Messiah members and the general public may not yet access the building.
- Entry for activities, meetings and programs need to be approved and coordinated with a Messiah staff member. In general, we are not resuming in-building activities at this time.
- These policies and hours of use will continue to evolve. They are restrictive in nature to allow for the cleaning and required sanitation of utilized spaces in the building.

Requirements for Building Use and Presence

Once inside the building, these general policies and guidelines will be followed:

- Facemasks are required.
- Use of hand sanitizer is required upon entrance to the building.
- Social distancing guidelines and practices must be observed at all times in the building.
- Everyone accessing the building must log-in and log-out and record what part of building they utilized.
- Church staff or trained volunteers will accompany visitors during their movement through the building. Also, if requested, church staff or trained volunteers can take items into, or retrieve from, different areas of the building.
- These policies and guidelines will continue to evolve. They are restrictive in nature to allow for the cleaning and required sanitation of utilized spaces in the building.

Office and Staff Hours

As we move through the phases of re-opening, Messiah's office hours and staff presence will slowly continue to increase. For the health and safety of Messiah Staff, they will begin to increase their presence in the building at higher levels at least two-weeks after each new phase is announced by the governor.

- Staff will be available for scheduled, in-person meetings in the building. Appropriate social distancing guidelines, along with the use of facemasks, will be required for these in-person meetings. To schedule an in-person meeting, contact the desired staff person directly. Email addresses and phone numbers are on the Messiah website (www.mlcauburn.org)

Worship

In-person worship is the most complicated aspect of congregational life to implement during a time of pandemic. Thoughtful planning is a must. There are special safety and cleanliness concerns to be weighed, as worship is by nature a communal activity involving a closed space, talking, singing, ritual movement and a high degree of physical interaction.

Weighing the desire for in-person worship with safety, hospitality to those more vulnerable to Covid-19, and evolving worship routines and liturgical practices, the following are the current recommendations:

- No in-person worship open to the general public is planned at this time.
- Messiah will continue to monitor the evolving situation and make plans for a gradual re-opening of in-person worship.
- Messiah is exploring a reservation system to help facilitate in-person worship in the future.
- A survey has been sent to the congregation to gather data on in-person worship preferences.
- Two worship services (Senior Sunday and AOB Sunday) have been held with immediate family members in attendance.
- Messiah worship leaders will continue to provide online worship on Sunday mornings.
- Worship leaders will follow the stated practices in this document for being present in the building.

Fellowship

Humans are social creatures, and the desire to physically be present for one another is an essential part of our lives. The following fellowship events are currently under consideration:

- In July, a Zoom fellowship for conversation about Messiah's life and practices will be held. It will end with a time for prayer requests and a brief scriptural reflection.
- In August, Messiah will host an online worship and celebration for Traci Vatne's retirement.

Faith Formation Programs

- Both mission trips, one to Alaska and one to the Spokane/Coeur d Alene area, have been cancelled.
- Trips to Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp, for both Family Camp and Kid Camp, have been cancelled.
- Savannah and Traci have put together a summer schedule for fellowship and mission events, along with VBS, which will take place both online and in small groups as the situation warrants.
- The Senior banquet has been cancelled. Senior Sunday was on June 28. It involved a modified worship broadcasted online with Senior families present in the building.
- AOB Sunday was on July 12. It involved a modified worship broadcasted online with AOB families present in the building.
- Conversations are being had regarding the fall scheduling of Sunday School, AOB, Adult Education, and various youth events. Planning is underway for situations "A", "B", and "C". Situation "A" is totally online. Situation "B" is totally in person. Situation "C" is a combination of online and in-person.

Service in the Community

Messiah continues to work with other community agencies to address the needs of the vulnerable in our midst. This is part of our DNA as a congregation and is clearly expressed through our community meals and Wednesday Food Bank.

- Our community meals and Wednesday Foodbank will continue to operate as currently scheduled.
- Volunteers for these programs will need to follow the above guidelines for being in the building including the log-in / log-out practice.

Future Directions

Considerations as the governor announces new phases for Washington's re-opening are as follows:

- We will continue to take a conservative approach to re-opening. As we move into each phase, we will observe for at least two weeks how the situation in that phase evolves and plan accordingly.
- Worship in-person will begin again slowly. Online worship will continue.
- Fall community life is being planned with both in-person and online options.
- This document is meant to evolve as guidelines from authorities, our community situation, and church conversation evolve. It will become more detailed as specific practices for being inside the building are practiced and refined. It is meant to be a starting point for our life together over these next months and possibly years.

PREVENTATIVE MEASURES:

Gathering Capacity: Messiah has determined that physical distancing requirements and building layout will limit our capacity to 60 or less individuals. Outdoor gatherings of no more than 100 individuals are allowed so long as all participants adhere to physical distancing and face covering requirements. Small groups may meet in person so long as groups do not exceed 5 persons from outside the host's home and all participants adhere to physical distancing and face covering requirements.

Check-In/Check-Out Process: Every person entering Messiah must log-in and provide a contact phone number. This information will be stored for a minimum of 14 days to ensure quick contact can be made in the event of a COVID-19 exposure in the building.

- All persons entering the building will do so through the north doors next to the main office, with the exception of community meal volunteers and certain lessee church members as described below.
- Once in the building, all persons will enter their name and contact information in the log-book and identify areas of the building being accessed. “Clean” pens are available along with a “used” receptacle to ensure all pens can be properly sanitized before reuse.
- All persons will then utilize the hand sanitizer available before moving further into the building.
- Community Meal volunteers will access the building through the kitchen door on the west side of the building and follow the same log-in protocol.
- Korean Presbyterian Church members will enter the building through a single southeast side door, entering directly into the gathering space and follow the same log-in protocol.
- Seventh-Day Adventist worship leaders will access the building through the north doors next to the main office and follow the same log-in protocol.

PPE Utilization: Face coverings are required by all persons not alone in the building and for all who attend any in-person activity at Messiah. Face coverings shall be worn for the duration of the visit (whether indoor or outside activity).

- Masks and gloves are available for Messiah staff and volunteers as needed, but we ask that all others entering the building to provide their own face covering.
- An exception to this rule will be made for those leading worship or leading congregational singing during service.

Physical Distancing: All staff, members and visitors, in all interactions, must maintain six feet of physical distance. Persons from the same household may sit together.

- Reminders of physical distancing requirements have been posted throughout the building.
- Staff workstations have been adjusted to ensure a minimum of six feet between them.
- Capacity in the Sanctuary will be limited to ensure six feet of space between the congregation members and/or families.
- Main facility bathrooms will be available for all in-person activities. Access will be limited to no more than 2 persons at a time.

Hygiene: Regular hand washing is strongly encouraged. The use of hand sanitizer is also necessary to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

- Touch-less hand sanitizer stands have been installed and refill service established with Fikes Products to ensure ample supply of hand sanitizer at all times. All staff and visitors are required to use hand sanitizer after logging in when entering the building, and again when entering the Sanctuary.
- Reminders of hand-washing have been posted in bathrooms and the kitchen.
- Water fountains have been taped off.

Food Service/Communion: Current State and local restrictions prohibit anything to be consumed from a communal container or plate. There may be no direct physical contact between servers and members and visitors.

- Food Bank and Community Meals will continue to serve community members outside the building with packaged food and grab and go meals.
- Messiah will continue to evaluate options for safe service of communion and establish a plan before any in-person worship services are resumed.

Symptom Monitoring: Staff, volunteers, and all visitors are asked to self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19, including taking a temperature reading before leaving home.

- Any person with a temperature of 100.4 or higher may not enter the building.
- All staff members and volunteers will also check their temperature when arriving in the building. Their temperatures will be recorded in the building log book.
- No person exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 may enter the building. Symptoms include, but are not limited to, fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, or congestion or runny nose.
- No person living with someone exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 or registering a temperature of 100.4 or higher may enter the building.

Singing: Guidelines prohibit Choirs from performing. During worship, song leaders will be stationed behind a plexiglass barrier. A minimum of 20 feet will be maintained between singers and persons sitting in the pews. Congregants must leave their masks on while singing.

Preaching/Worship Leadership: Individuals leading worship or preaching may do so without a mask. Congregants will remain at least 20 feet away from worship leaders.

MITIGATION MEASURES

Sanitation and Disinfection Procedures: A regular cleaning schedule that includes frequent cleaning and sanitizing with a particular emphasis on commonly touched surfaces has been established.

- Custodial cleaning service is performed multiple times per week and has been scheduled to coincide with current use of the building to ensure proper cleaning and sanitization between use. As building use increases, the cleaning schedule will be increased and modified to meet the scheduled use of the building.
- Messiah staff and lessee church leaders are required to disinfect high touch points after each use. This should include pews, altar rails, doorknobs, light switches, fan switches, tech board, piano keys, and microphones.
- Cleaning supplies have been provided throughout the building to support the cleaning requirements.
- Fikes Products is conducting electrostatic disinfectant services regularly in high-use areas of the building.

COVID-19 Safety Training: Messiah staff meets every Tuesday morning and will continue to discuss compliance with State and local guidelines for opening safely.

- Staff will continually stay informed with the latest COVID-19 safety and prevention strategies, including CDC, DOH, and OSHA recommendations.
- Staff will continue to work together to ensure Messiah remains in compliance with the latest State and local guidelines.
- Staff will continue to work together to ensure building use restrictions and sanitization procedures are always adhered to.

On-site COVID Supervisors: A group of volunteers will be trained in proper COVID prevention and exposure control. These volunteers will share the duty of being the onsite COVID Supervisor during any in-person activity scheduled in the building. Messiah will ensure other organizations utilizing the building have identified and trained a COVID Supervisor as well.

RECOVERY PLAN

Exposure Response and Incident Reporting: We ask that any person who has tested positive for COVID-19 and has been in the building or in contact with staff or volunteers from Messiah in the past 14 days to please notify a staff member immediately.

- The building log will be used to notify any person of a potential exposure to COVID-19.
- Any person exposed is encouraged to stay home, isolate immediately, and seek testing.
- Seek advice from your doctor on what to do if you are sick. If you do not have a doctor, contact King County COVID-19 call center between 8 AM – 7 PM PST at 206-477-3977.
- At this time, most employers are not required to report individual COVID-19 cases to the Health Department. The Health Department will be informed via the healthcare provider that conducts any COVID-19 tests.

Post-Exposure Incident Recovery Plan: If an exposure occurs in the Messiah building, we will follow King County guidelines for post-exposure recovery as described below.

- If it has been less than 7 days since the sick person has been in the facility, close off any areas used for prolonged periods of time by the sick person.
 - Wait 24 hours from the last time the sick person was in the facility before cleaning and disinfecting to minimize potential exposure for others. If waiting 24 hours is not feasible, wait as long as possible.
 - During the waiting period, open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in these areas.
- If it has been 7 days or more since the sick employee used the facility, additional cleaning and disinfection is not necessary. Continue routinely cleaning and disinfecting all high-touch surfaces in the facility.
- For further information, contact the King County COVID-19 Community and Business Compliance line at 206-296-1608 or send your questions to coronavirus@kingcounty.gov.