



May 14, 2020

Dear Faith-Based Community Leaders:

The Virginia Department of Health's Thomas Jefferson Health District (TJHD) is closely monitoring the COVID-19 pandemic locally and working diligently to prepare our community for reopening of services. As you know, this is a rapidly evolving situation with information changing regularly... As of this Friday, May 15, most of Virginia will enter Phase 1 of the [Forward Virginia Guidelines](#): Safer at Home, as outlined in the [Governor's Executive Order 61](#). Phase 1 is anticipated to last between two and four weeks.

We encourage your organizations and congregations to remain flexible with its policies and procedures to accommodate public health requirements and recommendations and help reduce infection.'

MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS FOR RELIGIOUS SERVICES

1. To reduce face-to-face interactions, community organizations and faith-based institutions should limit indoor meetings or gatherings to 50% occupancy.
2. Seating should be marked so congregants can easily maintain 6 ft of physical distance between members or families.
3. Allow enough time between gatherings to adequately clean and disinfect surfaces. A thorough cleaning and disinfection of frequently contacted surfaces must be conducted prior to and following any religious service.
4. Any items used to distribute food or beverages (such as communion) must be disposable and used only once and discarded.
5. Post signage that states that no one with a fever or symptoms of COVID-19, or known exposure to a COVID-19 case in the prior 14 days, is permitted in the establishment.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Congregants should wear cloth face coverings during gatherings.
2. Encourage congregants to participate via livestream, drive-in, or online gatherings.
3. Community members over age 60, with chronic medical conditions, or with compromised immune systems should avoid gatherings.

PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

- Consider using a projector to display sacred texts, scriptures, and songs to eliminate use of common, shared items (books, hymnals).
- Make hand sanitizer readily available.
- Keep doors propped open at the start and conclusion of gatherings to minimize contact.

(continued on page 2)

Thomas Jefferson Health District

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Serving:

Albemarle County

City of Charlottesville

Fluvanna County

Greene County

Louisa County

Nelson County

- Suspend the choir as part of services.
- Strongly encourage people to stay home if they do not feel well.
- Post signage reminding congregants or staff that if they have been sick, they may be permitted if they have had no fever for at least 72 hours (that is three full days of no fever without the use of medicine that reduces fevers), other symptoms have improved, and at least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

For more specific details and guidance, see the [Governor's Religious Service Guidelines](#)

If you need resources or more information, visit the [Virginia Safer-at-Home website](#), the Phase 1 [Religious Services Guidelines](#), or call TJHD's hotline at 434-972-6261 (open M-F from 8am-4:30pm). You can also find the latest local data on the [TJHD COVID-19 Data Dashboard](#).

Thank you for your efforts to keep everyone in the Thomas Jefferson Health District safe and healthy!

Sincerely,

Denise Bonds, MD, MPH

Director, Thomas Jefferson Health District

Virginia Department of Health

In Cooperation with the State Department of Health

