



African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church

# **GUIDANCE FOR REOPENING CHURCHES**

During the 2019-2020 Coronavirus Pandemic

*Faith & Order Taskforce*

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## **Introductory Statement**

The COVID-19 pandemic has and continues to seriously disrupt our public health, economic stability and mental (emotional) health. While many lament not being able to gather in the Lord's house for worship and other ministry activities and are increasingly anxious to reopen local churches, we stress the need for wisdom, patience, and extreme caution.

The guidance contained in this document results from the desire of the Board of Bishops of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (AME Zion Church), under the leadership of Bishop Staccato Powell, President of the Board of Bishops, to aid churches when the time comes for them to reopen. To that end, a Task Force was established consisting of Zionites across the breadth of the AME Zion Church and organized as follows:

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#### **Kairos Sub-Committee**

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The work of the Faith and Order Continuum Sub-Committee will be provided in a separate document at a future time.

The guidance contained in this document is based on what is currently known about the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Nonetheless, it is important that any planning is based upon a basic understanding about the COVID-19.

## Key Facts About COVID-19

Spread: The SARs-CoV-2 virus that causes COVID-19 is primarily spread person-to-person by respiratory droplets when a person coughs, sneezes, sings, shouts. Spread is more likely when people are in close contact with one another (within 6 feet or 2 arms lengths).

Symptom onset: Symptoms generally appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. During the up to 2-week period before symptoms appear, infected individuals may still spread the virus (i.e. asymptomatic spread). This fact is the impetus for social distancing as a main strategy for reducing risk.

Symptoms: Symptoms can include, but are not limited to, fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea.

Diagnosis: At this time, there are two types of tests for COVID-19: diagnostic tests and antibody blood tests.

The following guidance is not exhaustive. It is our hope that the information contained in this document will help prevent exposures to COVID-19 as churches resume activities.<sup>1</sup>

### WHEN TO REOPEN GUIDANCE (Kairos Sub-Committee)

***“For everything there is a season,  
and a time for every matter under heaven ...” (Ecclesiastes 3:1 NRSV)***

### Guiding Principle

Decisions relating to when and how to resume in-person church activities should be based upon a number of factors, including, the best scientific evidence available, the demographics and context of the local congregation, and the wise discernment of local leadership. It is important to know and follow the guidance of your state and local authorities, as well as general Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance for faith-based communities. These recommendations in this document are not intended to bypass those guidelines.

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<sup>1</sup>By using this guidance, the user acknowledges and affirms that nothing set forth in this document may result in any liability for the AME Zion Church, including any episcopal district, conference, district, local church, bishop, Task Force member, pastor, trustee, or assign affiliated with the AME Zion Church.

## Careful Use of Language

As you plan to “reopen,” avoid saying that the church is “closed.”<sup>2</sup> While the physical buildings may be closed, the spiritual function of “the church,” which is fulfilled through each of us who are the body of Christ, has and always will remain “open.”

## A Key Equation To Keep in Mind

$$\text{COVID-19 Infection} = \text{Exposure to Virus} \times \text{Time}$$

The longer you stay in an environment that may contain the virus, the higher the risk of getting sick.

- People get infected when they are exposed to a certain amount of viral particles. Coughing or sneezing releases a large number of virus particles into the air, but an infected person talking or even just breathing can still release some virus into the air, and over a long period of time in an enclosed space, could still infect others.
- If you get a high level of exposure, it is a short time to infection; if you get a low level of exposure, it takes a longer time before you become infected.
- In Washington state, a single infected person attended a 2-1/2 hour choir practice. Of the 61 attendees, 53 people (87% of the group), developed COVID-19 afterwards. Two people died. There was no reported physical contact between attendees at the choir practice, but they sat in chairs about 6-10 inches apart (with some empty seats between members).

## Timing Relating to Resuming In-person Gatherings

The safest time for in-person gatherings in the physical church building is when the following criteria are met:

- There is a downward trend in the number of new COVID-19 cases in your state for a defined period of time (previous guidance suggested a 14-day decline as a re-opening criteria). This requires widespread availability of testing, with rapid return of results. Also, there should be a downward trend in the number of COVID-19 cases in your local hospitals
- A vaccine against COVID-19 exists. (The normal timeframe for vaccine development is 12-18 months.)
- Valid antibody tests for COVID-19 are readily available .

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<sup>2</sup> It is acknowledged that some smaller congregations never discontinued in person gathering.

- A significant proportion of the population is immune to the virus.

Other important information to consider when determining when to physically gather in churches:

- The overall number of congregants at your typical service or congregation size.
- The number of congregants who are at higher risk for serious illness (e.g. older adults, individuals with high-risk underlying health conditions).
- How close together congregants will be positioned.
- The amount of spread in local community and the communities from where your congregants are likely to travel

### **Continued Use of Virtual Gatherings**

Based on the current state of the science, it is recommended that churches continue with virtual gatherings only (no in-person gathering in church buildings) until at least late summer/early fall (August/September 2020).<sup>3</sup>

### **FACILITIES AND OPERATIONAL GUIDANCE (Facilities Sub-Committee)**

***"And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of His return is drawing near." (Hebrews 10:25 NLT)***

As states and municipalities take steps towards reopening following the COVID-19 pandemic, it is critical that every local church have a clear facilities management plan PRIOR TO any attempt to reopen.

**We recommend that each presiding bishop establish Teams by episcopal district or conference comprised of persons with expertise that can aid churches in accessing risks and establishing protocols associated with reopening local churches and/or resuming church activities.**

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<sup>3</sup> The Kairos sub-committee will continue to monitor the situation and update the Board of Bishops as significant changes occur that would affect recommendations..

## Facilities-Related Reopening Standards At-A-Glance

- At least initially, limit the use of church facilities to Worship. This means conducting ministry online as much as possible especially board and ministry meetings, Bible Study, etc.
- If you plan to continue outreach ministry activities, ensure volunteers wear proper personal protective equipment (PPE) and that the activities take place outside of the church facilities (e.g. Parking Lot, Side door with no public entry into the facilities).
- Limit the size of attendance in your sanctuary and other confined spaces to create seating arrangements that provide **at least 6-foot** social distancing between each household unit. All seating should accommodate full compliance with CDC recommendations for social distancing and hygiene.
- Usher/Seat **all** persons upon entrance into the facility. Discourage unnecessary movement including visitation to other seated household units.
- Require a face covering be worn by all persons entering the facility including worship, meetings, etc.
- Ensure all members understand social distancing practices to avoid close person contact (e.g. no hugs, handshakes, fist bumps, sharing food or drink).
- Suspend choral singing including choir rehearsal. Consider recorded music (audio or video).
- If a soloist sings, ensure a minimum 10 ft. social distancing when singing is strictly observed. If the church cannot accommodate the 10 ft. social distancing standard, eliminate soloist singing.
- Limit instruments used to drum, guitar, and keyboard (i.e. piano, organ). **ABSOLUTELY** no woodwind or brass instruments that require blowing.
- Microphones should not be used by more than one person unless it has been sanitized thoroughly between usage.
- Restrict use of the choir loft, pulpit area and any other confined spaces to one (1) person per 10 feet.
- Ensure the pulpit and lectern (if the chancel is divided) are at least 10 feet apart.
- When using the lectern or pulpit, ensure persons are seated at least 10 feet away.

- More than one person should not use microphones unless it has been sanitized thoroughly between usages.
- Suspend the preparation, packing and/or serving of all food items.
- Suspend nursery services, Children's Church, etc.
- Require vulnerable populations (everyone 65 years and older, people with disabilities, people with serious respiratory or cardiovascular conditions, people who are immune compromised, and others) as well as children under age 3 to remain at home until a later time.
- Require members, staff, guests, vendors, etc. to stay at home if they are symptomatic, have a fever, have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID 19, or have traveled internationally or to a domestic hot spot within twenty one (21) days of their planned visit to your church.
- Decide if you will screen all persons entering the building (e.g. temperature check). If your church decides to do so, ensure you have the proper equipment and establish a written process that includes steps to maintain social distancing, proper hygiene, and confidentiality.

### **Phase 1: Preparing to Reopen the Local Church**

Following are actions that should be completed prior to reopening. Most churches should expect a **4 to 6-week** planning phase **prior to being ready** to reopen. The requirements are intentionally designed to ensure a local church takes every precaution to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

A local church should not reopen until it has completed certain preparations, including having:

- Carefully reviewed the reopening standards established by the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church and recommended by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).
- Provided training for all persons who are responsible for planning, implementing, and managing your church reopening.
- Removed and stored all pew Bibles, hymnals, envelopes, visitor cards, etc.
- Established and/or adopted a cleaning and sanitizing protocol.
- Ensured proper PPE and cleaning supplies are readily available.



- Assigned clear roles and responsibilities during the times the church will be open.
- Deep cleaned and sanitized the church facilities with attention to the sanctuary, offices, fellowship areas, restrooms, doorknobs/handles, etc. (See Appendix B, CDC Guidelines) *Be careful when cleaning children's areas as disinfectants can be harmful if ingested by little children who love to put toys in their mouths.* (If the church contracts with an external vendor for housekeeping, review cleaning and disinfectant standards and verify products to be used are appropriate.)
- Posted signage related to required PPE (e.g. face covering), social distancing practices (e.g. not shaking hands or hugging) and other pertinent information relative to your church's effort to stop the spread of COVID-19.
- Created a daily sign-in station and process for all members, guests, vendors, etc. who enter the facility to check in as well as determined where and how sign in sheets will be maintained. This will assist public health officials in contact tracing should there be an issue with exposure to someone with COVID-19. (See Appendix C)
- Secured/Maintained a recommended minimum of a 3-month supply of cleaning products (e.g. all-purpose cleaners, EPA regulated disinfectants and hand wipes, microfiber cloths and mops.)
- Secured and maintained a recommended minimum of a 3-month supply of personal protective equipment (PPE) for staff, members, guests, vendors, etc. including face coverings (masks), gloves, hand sanitizer, etc.
- Evaluated and repaired HVAC systems to make sure every area in the facilities has proper ventilation. Must be able to verify HVAC fresh air dampers are open and operational at a minimum of 10 – 15%.
- Posted signs about proper handwashing in all restrooms as well as the nursery, kitchen, pantry, sacristy, and other appropriate places.
- Carefully manage the flow of members out of the sanctuary following the Benediction. Dismiss by rows or sections and encourage members to proceed directly to their vehicles. Discourage congregating on church property.

**We recommend consideration be given to the provided checklist before reopening.** (See Appendix A) Once the local church has determined that it is prepared to reopen the church should:

- Communicate reopening plans including the preparation underway with your congregation **at least 3 weeks** before the facilities are scheduled to reopen.
- Use diverse methods (e.g. email, mail, conference calls, flyers, text messaging, auto phone calls, Class Leaders, etc.) to inform members. Be sure all members,

guests and vendors are apprised of any requirements for those who plan to return when the facilities reopen.

- Open and ran all faucets for at least five (5) minutes to allow any stagnant water that may be in the pipes to flow out.
- Lock and/or blocked off all spaces that will be restricted or not used during the initial re-entry phases including offices, nurseries, classrooms, kitchens, pantries, restrooms, and balconies.
- If restrooms will be open during the initial re-entry phase, determine how many are necessary and close any remaining restroom facilities.
- If restrooms will be open during the initial re-entry phase, establish a cleaning schedule, assign persons responsible and ensure supplies (including PPE) are readily available.
- Visibly delineate proper social distancing (at least 6 feet apart) for space to be used for worship.
- Ensure all other activities should take place outside or online. In person activities (e.g. outreach) should take place with all staff, volunteers and participants using the proper PPE and social distancing practices until credible public health officials revise standards for public gatherings.
- Install and use microphone covers. Wash and thoroughly dry mic cover after every use.
- Require members of your church to stay at home if they are considered at increased risk, symptomatic, have a fever, have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, or have traveled internationally or to a domestic hot spot in the past two weeks.
- Sanitize shared resources after each use, and sanitize all high-traffic/high-touch areas (restrooms, doorknobs, counters, microphones, seats, etc.)
- Use a clearly designated **ENTRANCE** and a separate clearly designated **EXIT** to maintain social distancing. Install signage and always be prepared to give clear verbal instruction.
- Post signage in multiple locations with words to this effect: **BY YOUR PRESENCE YOU ASSUME THE RISK OF EXPOSURE TO THE CORONAVIRUS.**

## Phase 2: Limited Reopening of the Local Church

The standards outlined in Phase 1 remain applicable when a local church determines that it is ready for a limited reopening.

Additionally, your church should:

- Review church facilities management plans and make any adjustments based on the most current COVID-19 mitigation levels in your community.
- Use a clearly designated entrance and a separate, clearly designated exit. Be sure to install signage and give clear verbal instructions.
- If your church has elected to screen persons prior to entering facilities, open the check in station at least 1 hour before worship is scheduled to begin. Provide means for persons waiting in line for screening to maintain social distancing practices. Ensure all volunteers/staff always wear proper PPE.
- Prop entry and exit doors open (weather permitting) to reduce the need to touch doorknobs and encourage the flow of fresh air.
- Provide PPE to each person entering facilities. At a minimum, provide a new, disposable face mask.
- Limit access to the Church Offices to the pastor, his/her spouse, Preacher's Steward and Trustee on duty. Lock doors and/or use signage as needed.
- Totally restrict access to other offices, nurseries, classrooms, kitchens, pantries, and balconies.
- Clearly indicate restroom facilities that are open. Lock or place clear signage on those which are not in use.
- Limit the activities inside of the church facilities to no more than three (3) days a week, including worship. Ensure resources are available for the facilities to be cleaned following EACH use.
- All other activities should take place outside of the church facilities (e.g. in the parking lot) or online.
- Suspend nursery services and/or separate children's activities.
- Based on local and/or state ordinances regarding limits on gathering size, ensure the attendance in any space to be used (including the Sanctuary) is in full compliance or does not exceed **50% of maximum capacity of the room** and must ensure full compliance with CDC recommendations for social distancing and hygiene.

- When enforcing social distancing, families (persons living in the same households) may be seated together otherwise all seating should reflect social distancing standards and be clearly delineated 6 feet apart.
- Carefully manage the flow of members **out** of the Sanctuary following the Benediction. Dismiss by rows or sections and encourage members to proceed directly to their vehicles. Discourage congregating on church property.
- If your church decides to have more than a single worship service per day, ensure sufficient time in between services to allow for proper cleaning and sanitizing. This may require the allowance of four (4) hours between services or activities for proper cleaning and sanitizing.
- In person activities (e.g. outreach) should take place with all staff, volunteers and participants using the proper PPE and social distancing practices until credible public health officials revise standards for public gatherings.

### **Phase 3: Expanded Operations of the Local Church**

The standards outlined relating to Phases 1 and 2 remain applicable. Additionally, your church should:

- Review church facilities management plans and make any adjustments based on the most current COVID-19 mitigation levels in your community.
- Keep an online meeting option for those who are uncomfortable or unable to attend your service in person for any reason.
- Based on the most current local or state ordinances regarding gathering sizes, limit the size of attendance in your primary worship space (e.g. Sanctuary) to no more than **75% of maximum capacity of the room** and ensure full compliance with CDC recommendations for social distancing and hygiene.
- Establish the size of attendance for worship and other ministry activities based on room capacity and current local and/or state ordinances related to gathering size while maintaining social distancing practiced based on the most current guidelines.

### **Phase 4: Managing Church Facilities in the New Normal**

The standards outlined relating to Phases 1-3 remain applicable. Additionally, your church should:

- Review church facilities management plans and make any adjustments based on the most current COVID-19 mitigation levels in your community.

- Keep an online meeting option for those who are uncomfortable or unable to attend your service in person for any reason.
- Restrict access to kitchens and pantries to those serving pre-packaged or catered food.
- Ensure persons handling food of any kind practice recommended hygiene with respect to handwashing, wear proper PPE including mask, gloves and head covering (e.g. hair net).
- No food preparation or cooking of any kind on site until a COVID-19 vaccine is widely available.

### **If Someone Tests Positive For Covid-19:**

- If you learn that a staff person, guest, or member of your congregation has tested positive for COVID-19, **IMMEDIATELY CEASE IN-PERSON ACTIVITIES** for at least fourteen (14) days following the date of the possible exposure.
- Notify persons who may have been exposed to COVID-19 to seek medical attention including testing and to self-quarantine for at least fourteen (14) days. (Any notifications of possible exposure should not include a disclosure of the identity of the person who has tested positive for COVID-19.)
- While the building is closed, ensure proper cleaning and sanitizing, review protocols and adjust as needed. Plan reopening once ALL required actions are completed.

### **Additional Guidance:**

- Provide a clean, properly sanitized full-face shield for the individual preaching.
- Sanitize shared resources after each use and sanitize all high-traffic/high-touch areas (restrooms, doorknobs, counters, instruments, microphones, seats, etc.) immediately following worship.
- Encourage members of your church to stay at home if they are at increased risk, symptomatic, have a fever, have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, or have traveled internationally or to a domestic hot spot in the past two weeks.
- Establish a Recovery Task Force to assist in preparation, implementation and maintaining a safe and healthy return to the church. Include members from the Trustee Board, Steward Board, Class Leaders Ministry and Health Ministry

including any public health and safety professionals in your congregation or community.

- Have carpets and floors cleaned by a professional carpet cleaner who can clean and disinfect carpets and hard floor areas.
- Install touchless soap and/or hand sanitizer dispensers in all restrooms, nurseries, classrooms and common use areas like the fellowship hall and narthex.
- Install touchless paper towel dispensers or air dryers in all restrooms.
- Explore the feasibility of installing a plexiglass shield in front of the pulpit. Use of a full-face shield allows for greater mobility and is less cost prohibitive.
- Enroll in and use paperless billing and online banking services.
- Secure all church-related passwords and ensure all church-related accounts are tied to the official church email.
- Eliminate in-person check signing and distribution (as much as possible) by using remote or automatic bill payment features offered by most financial institutions.
- If you have not already done so, establish at least one online giving option for your local church (e.g. Givelify, PayPal, CashApp).
- Strongly encourage use of online giving options. Leverage your youth and young adults to assist seniors with set up of their online giving account.
- Do not pass offering receptacles.
- Lightly spray all offering receptacles with Lysol® or other disinfectant and allow offering to sit for at least fifteen (15) minutes before handling.
- When counting cash/check receipts:
  - Ensure room is well ventilated, large enough to maintain social distance of at least six (6) feet apart
  - Ensure persons counting wear proper PPE including mask (face covering) and sterile gloves
  - Lightly spray all cash/checks with Lysol® or other disinfectant and allow offering to sit for at least fifteen (15) minutes before handling.
  - Lightly spray bank bag or whatever is used to store the offering prior to deposit with Lysol® or other disinfectant and allow offering to sit for at least fifteen (15) minutes before handling.

- Ensure the outside of the container in which the offering is secured is routinely cleaned and disinfected.
- Wash hands immediately after handling mail and packages using standard handwashing guidelines.
- Consider a Post Office (P.O.) Box. If you do not have access to a P.O. Box, restrict access to your facility by mail carriers, package delivery staff, etc.
- Ensure mail receptacle is secure, designate person(s) to be responsible for mail and ensure person(s) responsible for handling mail and packages wears proper PPE including mask (face covering) and gloves.
- Spray all mail/packages with Lysol® or other disinfectant and allow it to sit for at least fifteen (15) minutes before handling.
- Spray all internal mail bins, boxes, etc. with Lysol® or other disinfectant and allow it to sit for at least fifteen (15) minutes before placing mail inside.
- Wash hands immediately after handling mail and packages using standard handwashing guidelines.
- Discontinue hosting outside programs or organizations until all reopening criteria is met.

### **WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTAL PRACTICE GUIDANCE (Worship Practices and Sacramental Theology Sub-Committee)**

***“God is our refuge and strength,  
an ever-present help in trouble.” (Psalm 46:1)***

In light of the Coronavirus pandemic, churches must rethink typical gathering practices that have the potential to put people at risk. The needed changes will affect the worship and sacramental practices of local churches. What follows is guidance for churches relating to worship and sacramental practices intended to promote a healthy environment for congregants.

We provide the following guidance:

#### **Considerations Relating to Worship and Small Groups**

- Don't rush back into full-fledged ministry activities. Remember, our highest priority must be and remain the safety of our members and staff during this global health crisis.

- Limit the size of gatherings in accordance with the guidance and directives of state and local authorities. All in person gatherings, especially those inside church buildings, should be kept short and concise.
- Consider rotating congregants from week to week (i.e. by classes or other designation) to allow for proper social distancing. For example: Group A consisting of classes 1-3 comes to the church building for worship on the first Sunday, Group B consisting of classes 4-6 on the second Sunday, etc. Alternatively: Group A comes on first and third Sundays and Group B comes on second and fourth Sundays. (If communion is offered, all groups should have an opportunity to receive communion.)
- The entire worship service should be **no longer than one hour**.
- All ages should be included in the same worship services as breakout groups should be prohibited throughout the church facilities.
- Consider video streaming or drive-in options for services. Always maintain a virtual option and presence.
- If appropriate and possible, **add additional services to weekly schedules** to maintain social distancing at each service, ensuring that clergy, staff, and volunteers at the services can maintain social distancing.
  - Several worship service opportunities could also allow for congregants to register for a particular service so as to keep a count on the number of people in attendance for each gathering (this process should make allowance for potential visitors)
- Consider holding services and gatherings in a large, well-ventilated area or outdoors, as circumstances allow.
- Space out seating for attendees who do not live in the same household to at least six feet apart when possible; consider limiting seating to alternate rows.
- Develop creative ways to welcome those who would join our gatherings. Words of welcome could be offered by church members standing near entryways and/or from a single designee across the pulpit or lectern.
- Consider developing a plan for socially distant movement as people enter, exit, and proceed about the church space.



- It is highly recommended that floor markings and or signage be prominently displayed throughout the facility to guide congregants away from close contact.
- This could mean a single entry point into the building and a separate exit for all.
- This could also mean isles and hallways marked as one way depending upon the design of the space.
- If virtual options are not possible, all small groups (Bible study and Sunday school) should be discontinued.
- **Congregational singing should be discontinued until further notice.**
- Limit choral groups to no more than six (6) persons. To ensure proper social distancing is practiced, persons must sit and stand at least ten (10) feet apart.
- Limit instruments used during in-person worship to drum, guitar, and keyboard (i.e. piano, organ instruments). **ABSOLUTELY no instruments that require blowing should be permitted.**

### **Considerations Relating Ministry and Worship Materials**

- Limit the sharing of frequently touched objects. All worship aids such as pew Bibles, hymnals, bulletins, books, or other items should be removed from the sanctuary and communal space.
- Nothing should be passed or shared communally among congregants.
- Congregants should bring their own bibles, if necessary, and no personal items should be left in the communal space.
- Microphone hygiene is extremely important at all times.
  - Microphones and other similar equipment should not be shared by or passed between people.
  - Once used, all microphones should be dis-assembled and sanitized before use again.
- Consider a stationary collection box, the mail, or electronic methods of collecting regular financial contributions instead of shared collection trays or baskets.

- Avoid or limit close physical contact among church members during gatherings such as approaching the altar for prayer or to receive communion.

## **Considerations Relating to Sacramental Practices**

### *Baptism*

- It is recommended that all baptisms, in any form, be postponed until further notice.

### *Holy Communion*

- At this time, the Board of Bishops of the A.M.E. Zion church prohibits virtual communion.
- Due to the inherent risks associated with in person Holy Communion, the safest practice is for local churches not to offer communion until there is a reliable vaccine for COVID-19.<sup>4</sup>
- However, if local churches decide to offer in person Holy Communion, after having taken time to understand the inherent risks, we provide the following guidance:
  - Clergy and deaconesses must wear gloves/masks and use hand sanitizer during the entire communion service. (Gloves may need to be changed and hand sanitizer used multiple times during the communion service.)
  - Use pre-packaged communion cups with wafers, recognizing that these are sometimes hard to open. (If assistance in opening pre-packaged communion elements is offered, avoid cross-contamination.)
  - Invite congregants (using proper social distancing) to the altar to receive their pre-packed elements from the celebrant/con-celebrant and have them return to their seats to commune together.
  - Disallow self-service, passing of elements, and kneeling of any kind.

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<sup>4</sup>Regarding our process for conducting Holy Communion, the Worship Practices Sub-Committee lamented after hearing that members of the A.M.E Zion church may be participating in Holy Communion with other churches outside of Zion. As it was brought to the attention of and discussed by this subcommittee that some other Methodist churches (A.M.E., C.M.E. and the UMC) are practicing “virtual” communion and it has been reported that Zionites are actively participating in these virtual services. Upon hearing this information our subcommittee felt it important to seek to address the matter and offer recommendations

- Communion in cars should only take place with the permission of the presiding bishop and using all of the same safety and contamination avoidance protocols outlined above. All communion elements must be consumed in the presence of the clergy who has distributed the elements.
- Communion elements may not be mailed or distributed to persons for home use.

### **Considerations Relating to Funerals/Visitations and Weddings/Celebrations**

- Funerals and weddings are worship services. They should be conducted with the same cautions and advice of regular worship gatherings.
- Despite familial and cultural expectations and pressures to allow these services to take place, safety must be the first priority of each church.

#### *Funerals/Memorial Services/Visitations*

- During Phases 1 and 2, visitation, funerals, or memorial services should be held at the Funeral Home, rather than in church facilities.
- During Phases 3 and 4, if and when funerals and memorial services return to church buildings they should be limited to one hour, and visitations should be limited to one hour. All applicable social distancing and other safety guidance must be followed.

#### *Weddings and Celebrations*

- During Phases 1 and 2, no weddings or other celebrations should be held in our church buildings.
- During Phases 3 and 4, weddings may take place with strict adherence to social distancing and limitations on attendee size. Wedding participants should arrive at the church fully dressed and the ceremony should be accomplished in one hour. Outside of weddings, other celebrations should not take place.

We pray that the guidance provided in this document will be useful for our churches as they make decisions relating to whether, when, and how to reopen.

# APPENDIX A

## SUGGESTED REOPENING CHECKLIST

## SUGGESTED REOPENING CHECKLIST

### Has the church:

\_\_\_\_\_ Carefully reviewed the reopening guidance provided by the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church and recommended by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

\_\_\_\_\_ Provided training for all persons who are responsible for planning, implementing, and managing your church reopening.

\_\_\_\_\_ Removed and stored all pew Bibles, hymnals, envelopes, visitor cards, etc.

\_\_\_\_\_ Established and/or adopted a cleaning and sanitizing protocol.

\_\_\_\_\_ Ensured a 3-month supply of the proper PPE and cleaning supplies are readily available.

\_\_\_\_\_ Assigned clear roles and responsibilities during the times the church will be open.

\_\_\_\_\_ Deep cleaned and sanitized (or had a vendor to) the church facilities with attention to the sanctuary, offices, fellowship areas, restrooms, doorknobs/handles, etc.

\_\_\_\_\_ Posted signage related to required PPE (e.g. face covering), social distancing practices (e.g. not shaking hands or hugging) and other pertinent information relative to our church's effort to stop the spread of COVID-19.

\_\_\_\_\_ Created a Daily Sign in station and process for all members, guests, vendors, etc. who enter the facility to check in as well as determined where and how sign in sheets will be maintained.

\_\_\_\_\_ Secured/Maintained a minimum of a 3-month supply of cleaning products.

\_\_\_\_\_ Secured and maintained a suggested minimum of a 3-month supply of personal protective equipment (PPE) for staff, members, guests, vendors, etc. including face coverings (masks), gloves, hand sanitizer, etc.

\_\_\_\_\_ Evaluated and repaired HVAC systems to make sure every area in the facilities has proper ventilation. Must be able to verify HVAC fresh air dampers are open and operational at a minimum of 10 – 15%.

\_\_\_\_\_ Posted signs about proper handwashing in all restrooms as well as the nursery, kitchen, pantry, sacristy, and other appropriate places.

\_\_\_\_\_ Created a plan to carefully manage the dismissal and flow of members **out** of the Sanctuary following the Benediction.

# APPENDIX B

## CDC CLEANING AND SANITIZING GUIDELINES

# CDC CLEANING AND SANITIZING GUIDELINES

## Cleaning And Disinfecting Your Facility

### Everyday Steps, Steps When Someone is Sick, and Considerations for Employers

#### How to clean and disinfect

**Wear disposable gloves** to clean and disinfect.

#### Clean

- **Clean surfaces using soap and water.** Practice routine cleaning of frequently touched surfaces.

#### High touch surfaces include:

Tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, sinks, etc.

#### Disinfect

- Clean the area or item with soap and water or another detergent if it is dirty. Then, use a household disinfectant.
- **Recommend use of EPA-registered household disinfectant.** Follow the instructions on the label to ensure safe and effective use of the product.

Many products recommend:

- Keeping surface wet for a period of time (see product label).
- Precautions such as wearing gloves and making sure you have good ventilation during use of the product.



- **Diluted household bleach solutions may also be used** if appropriate for the surface. Check to ensure the product is not past its expiration date. Unexpired household bleach will be effective against coronaviruses when properly diluted.

**Follow manufacturer's instructions** for application and proper ventilation. Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser.

**Leave solution** on the surface for **at least 1 minute**

Bleach solutions will be **effective** for disinfection **up to 24 hours**.

**To make a bleach solution, mix:**

- 5 tablespoons (1/3rd cup) bleach per gallon of water

OR

- 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water

- **Alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol.**



#### Soft surfaces

For soft surfaces such as **carpeted floor, rugs, and drapes**

- **Clean the surface using soap and water** or with cleaners appropriate for use on these surfaces.



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[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus)

# CDC CLEANING AND SANITIZING GUIDELINES – Pg. 2

- **Launder items** (if possible) according to the manufacturer's instructions. Use the warmest appropriate water setting and dry items completely.

OR

- **Disinfect with an EPA-registered household disinfectant.** [These disinfectants](#) meet EPA's criteria for use against COVID-19.

## Electronics

- For electronics, such as **tablets, touch screens, keyboards, remote controls, and ATM machines**
- Consider putting a **wipeable** cover on electronics.
- **Follow manufacturer's instruction** for cleaning and disinfecting.
  - If no guidance, **use alcohol-based wipes or sprays containing at least 70% alcohol.** Dry surface thoroughly.



## Laundry

For clothing, towels, linens and other items

- Launder items according to the manufacturer's instructions. Use the **warmest appropriate water setting** and dry items completely.
- **Wear disposable gloves** when handling dirty laundry from a person who is sick.
- Dirty laundry from a person who is sick **can be washed with other people's items.**
- **Do not shake** dirty laundry.
- Clean and **disinfect clothes hampers** according to guidance above for surfaces.
- **Remove gloves**, and wash hands right away.



## Cleaning and disinfecting your building or facility if someone is sick

- **Close off areas** used by the person who is sick.
- **Open outside doors and windows** to increase air circulation in the area. **Wait 24 hours** before you clean or disinfect. If 24 hours is not feasible, wait as long as possible.
- Clean and disinfect **all areas used by the person who is sick**, such as offices, bathrooms, common areas, shared electronic equipment like tablets, touch screens, keyboards, remote controls, and ATM machines.
- If **more than 7 days** since the person who is sick visited or used the facility, additional cleaning and disinfection is not necessary.
  - Continue routine cleaning and disinfection.



## When cleaning

- **Wear disposable gloves and gowns for all tasks in the cleaning process, including handling trash.**
  - Additional personal protective equipment (PPE) might be required based on the cleaning/disinfectant products being used and whether there is a risk of splash.
  - Gloves and gowns should be removed carefully to avoid contamination of the wearer and the surrounding area.
- **Wash your hands often** with soap and water for 20 seconds.
  - Always wash immediately after removing gloves and after contact with a person who is sick.





## CDC CLEANING AND SANITIZING GUIDELINES – Pg. 3

- Hand sanitizer: If soap and water are not available and hands are not visibly dirty, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol may be used. However, if hands are visibly dirty, always wash hands with soap and water.

- **Additional key times to wash hands** include:

- After blowing one's nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- After using the restroom.
- Before eating or preparing food.
- After contact with animals or pets.
- Before and after providing routine care for another person who needs assistance (e.g., a child).

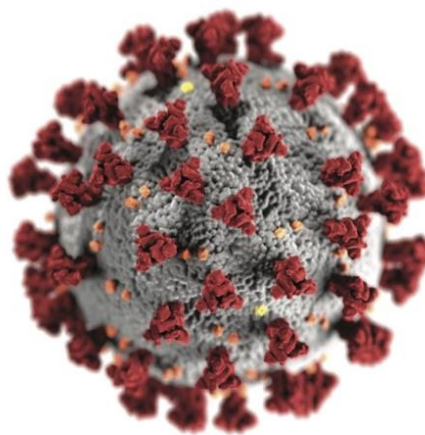
### Additional Considerations for Employers



- **Educate workers** performing cleaning, laundry, and trash pick-up to recognize the symptoms of COVID-19.
- Provide instructions **on what to do if they develop symptoms within 14 days** after their last possible exposure to the virus.
- Develop **policies for worker protection and provide training** to all cleaning staff on site prior to providing cleaning tasks.
  - Training should include when to use PPE, what PPE is necessary, how to properly don (put on), use, and doff (take off) PPE, and how to properly dispose of PPE.
- Ensure workers are **trained on the hazards of the cleaning chemicals** used in the workplace in accordance with OSHA's Hazard Communication standard ([29 CFR 1910.1200](#)).
- **Comply** with OSHA's standards on Bloodborne Pathogens ([29 CFR 1910.1030](#)), including proper disposal of regulated waste, and PPE ([29 CFR 1910.132](#)).

### For facilities that house people overnight:

- Follow CDC's guidance for [colleges and universities](#). Work with state and local health officials to determine the best way to isolate people who are sick and if temporary housing is needed.
- For guidance on cleaning and disinfecting the bedroom/bathroom for someone who is sick, review CDC's guidance on [disinfecting your home if someone is sick](#).



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# APPENDIX C

## SAMPLE FACILITIES SIGN IN SHEET

[NAME OF THE CHURCH]

To ensure the health and safety of our members and guests, we require all persons entering this facility to sign in. In the event of a public health crisis (e.g. report of a positive COVID-19 test), this measure will help public health officials to quickly contact those who may have been exposed. Thank you, for your understanding!

### PLEASE PRINT LEGIBLY

| Date | Time | Full Name | Number of children present (include ages) | Cell or Home Phone | Email |
|------|------|-----------|---|--------------------|-------|
|      |      |           |   |                    |       |
|      |      |           |   |                    |       |
|      |      |           |   |                    |       |
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