



CECIL COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

JOHN M. BYERS HEALTH CENTER • 401 BOW STREET • ELKTON, MD 21921

LAUREN LEVY, JD, MPH, HEALTH OFFICER
WWW.CECILCOUNTYHEALTH.ORG

May 22, 2020

Dear Faith Community Leaders,

As we enter Stage One of the Maryland Strong: Roadmap to Recovery, I wanted to reach out to you to ensure that you are aware of the new guidelines for faith communities, and provide some additional recommendations to help keep your congregations safe and reduce the spread of COVID-19 in our community.

The Executive Order issued May 13th states that religious facilities may open to the general public on May 15th at 5:00 pm provided that the number of persons permitted at any time does not exceed 50% of maximum occupancy. As you reopen your facilities, I urge you to adopt additional measures recommended by the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives workgroup of faith-based leaders to ensure the safety of your congregations. These include:

- Limiting attendance to the number of people who can fit into your worship space while maintaining a distance of at least 7 feet between individuals or family groups;
- Wearing face masks;
- Taking non-contact temperature at the door (preferred) or at home and asking anyone with a fever (100.4° F or higher) to remain at home;
- Refraining from congregational singing. Singing dramatically increases the risk of transmitting COVID;
- Sanitizing contact surfaces before and after worship;
- Scheduling multiple, shorter services;
- Continuing faith-based ministerial visits following public health guidelines; and
- Ensuring that sick congregants, or those exposed to someone who is sick, remain at home for at least two weeks.

To read the Faith-Based Workgroup's guidance, visit <https://gocil.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/05/Faith-Based-Recommendations.pdf>

Faith leaders may choose to implement additional measures to protect their congregation, and as the Health Officer for Cecil County, I would recommend the following:

- Live streaming of services and encouraging vulnerable members of your congregation, such as older adults and those with underlying health conditions, to continue to participate virtually;
- Holding religious services outside where possible. This helps dissipate viral particles much more effectively than indoor settings; and
- Delaying opening until you are prepared to provide additional measures for safety, including:

Healthy People. Healthy Community. Healthy Future.

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES.....	410-996-5550	ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES.....	410-996-5160
ALCOHOL AND DRUG RECOVERY CENTER.....	410-996-5106	HEALTH PROMOTION.....	410-996-5168
EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS.....	410-996-5113	MENTAL HEALTH AND SPECIAL POPULATIONS SERVICES.....	410-996-5112
COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES.....	410-996-5130	TTY USERS FOR DISABLED: MARYLAND RELAY.....	800-201-7165
DISEASE CONTROL.....	410-996-5100	EN ESPAÑOL.....	410-996-5550 EXT 4680

- planned traffic patterns
- adequate amounts of disinfectant
- disposable masks for those who forget them
- hand sanitizer
- alternative music plans
- signage related to social distancing measures
- safe processes for offerings, Communion, and other actions that involve multiple people touching the same objects
- plans for congregants who become ill while at a service

Your denomination may have additional guidance for your congregation.

If you have questions or concerns regarding these recommendations, or would like assistance in determining how to hold religious services safely, please contact us at info@cecilcountyhealth.org. We would be happy to assist you.

For additional information on COVID-19, please refer to Cecil County Health Department's website at <http://cecilcountyhealth.org/coronavirus/> or call our COVID-19 Call Center at 410-996-1005, open Monday – Friday from 8 am – 5 pm.

Thank you for your time and attention. With your cooperation, we can better protect your congregations and our community.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lauren Levy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lauren Levy, JD, MPH
Health Officer