

March 13, 2020

Dear Faith Leaders,



**Macon County**  
**Public Health**

The Faith-Based Community can take actions now to help to protect your worshippers and staff from the spread of respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19. We understand that the Novel Coronavirus, now known as COVID-19, is causing anxiety in our community. We are working to provide you with the most up to date information on this rapidly changing situation. Following is a brief overview of the current situation. For more information and FAQ's, please visit <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/public-health/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-response-north-carolina/covid-19>, or directly from reliable sources like Macon County Public Health, NCDHHS, and the CDC.

#### WHAT IS KNOWN

- The virus causing COVID-19 is a new coronavirus that has not been previously identified and causes a respiratory illness ranging from a mild cold-like illness to severe pneumonia.
- Most (81%) of people diagnosed with COVID-19 in China had mild disease, including most children.
- Similar to influenza, the people who are most likely to develop severe disease and complications from COVID-19 are older individuals (>65 years old) and those with other medical conditions like heart and lung disease or diabetes.
- There is no vaccine or treatment currently available for COVID-19, but the National Institutes of Health is evaluating treatments and developing a vaccine.
- Currently, a small number of North Carolina individuals in the Triangle area have tested presumptively positive for novel coronavirus, or #COVID19. COVID-19 is currently not widespread in North Carolina.
- However, experts predict there will eventually be community spread. MCPH is preparing for when this happens.

#### HOW THE VIRUS SPREADS

- COVID-19 is believed to spread primarily the same way the common cold or flu spreads—through respiratory droplets that are produced when someone coughs or sneezes.
- People who are most at risk of becoming infected with COVID-19 are those who have been in close contact (within about 6 feet) with someone who has the disease.
- People are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest).
- Some spread of the virus might be possible before a person has symptoms; there have been reports of this with COVID-19, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.
- COVID-19 can also live on surfaces for several days. Therefore, frequent cleaning and disinfecting of frequently touched surfaces is very important.

#### WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW

- Encourage congregation to stay home if they or a household member is sick.
- Consider the needs of older adults over 65+, persons with compromised immune systems, and other individuals with cancer, chronic disease such as heart, lung disease and diabetes.
- Provide and use supplies such as soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, tissues and lined trash baskets.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with tissue or elbow.

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- Clean frequently touched surfaces and objects (everyday household disinfectants are fine). See enclosed disinfectant mixing instructions.
- Increase cleaning of high touch surfaces like door knobs, toilet handles, prayer rails, and sink handles.
- Identify services or programs which might be limited to or temporarily dropped during an outbreak. EX. Youth functions, nursery, meals, and senior adult activities.
- If you offer communion during your service, consider the most sanitary way to offer the elements to your congregation.

The CDC website has further information for facility preparation, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/guidance-community-faith-organizations.html> to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in Faith-Based communities.

For more information, or if you have questions, please contact Macon County Public Health at 828-349-2081.

Thank you for your cooperation and understanding,

Carmine Rocco,  
Macon County Health Director