

## **Scenarios to Consider Moving Forward in the Pandemic May 2020**

Due to the geographic extent of LMC, a single guideline for opening up after “shelter-a- home” is not possible. Different parts of the country have different levels of impact by the virus. The Northeast, Illinois, and Florida, especially, are still having significant community-spread cases.

Hence, know and abide by Local and State guidelines. An overview map of cases is available here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/cases-in-us.html>. From the map at this site, if you click on a state in the map, you will be redirected to your state website for Covid 19 local information. Note that in some states, restrictions are county by county. Be alert that highly focused economic interests may consider "a reasonable loss of life" an acceptable cost for doing business.

Masks aid in the reduction of community spread. The expectation is that all gatherings for the foreseeable future should expect the use of masks for all. The primary benefit of masks is to reduce the risk of a person with the virus from spreading the infection to others. A mask has minimal help in reducing airborne infection communicated to the wearer. But by wearing a mask you do provide protection to other people if you might be a virus carrier. This process only works if all people wear masks. If everyone wears masks, we all protect the other person.

Because a one-size-fits-all approach to reducing social distancing will not work because of geographic diversity, LMC provides the following general guidelines for three different scenarios:

### **Scenario 1 Shelter-at-Home continues - meeting options**

- a) Use ZOOM or other internet-based meeting software to conduct meetings. If your congregation is streaming a worship service, continue to encourage connection.
- b) If you are unable to stream, encourage members to join the service of a congregation that is streaming. A small list of streaming congregations is on the LMC homepage ([www.lmccchurches.org](http://www.lmccchurches.org)).
- c) Use phone calls and email to keep connections and phone and email prayer chains.
- d) Some congregations are doing Sunday School classes and prayer meetings quite successfully by ZOOM.

### **Scenario 2 Limited opening, restricted meeting size options**

- a) Insist that anyone who does not feel well is to stay home. Maintain social distancing and the use of masks for everyone, no exceptions.
- b) Link small, in-person, group gatherings with other in-person, small groups by ZOOM for larger virtual prayer or worship services. Alternately, schedule multiple, smaller services with the same group of people. Adequately disinfect all common-space surfaces between gatherings. For the present, avoid the use of hymnals.

- c) Sunday school classes, if under any small-group size restriction, could meet in person. However, small, in-person meetings must maintain social distancing and use masks.
- d) Use hands free collection boxes for the offering. Have money-counters wear gloves. Encourage electronic donations if that is an option.
- e) Have adequate supplies available to disinfect hands and surfaces.
- f) Community spread with large numbers of infections remain possible, especially as colder weather comes on and we spend more time indoors sharing space and air.

### **Scenario 3 No restriction on size of meeting**

- a. Insist that anyone who does not feel well is to stay home. Maintain social distancing and the use of masks for everyone, no exceptions, until a vaccine appears later in 2021..
- b. Consider any learning that took place in your handling of the pandemic. What new ways of doing things are worth keeping even though you are assembling freely? What things make sense to stop?
- c. Use hands free collection boxes for the offering. Have money-counters wear gloves. Encourage electronic donations if that is an option.
- d. Maintain handwashing regimen and disinfect common-space surfaces regularly. Have adequate supplies available to disinfect hands and surfaces. Community spread with large numbers of infections remain possible, especially as colder weather comes on and we group closely and spend more time indoors.

In all cases, plan any gathering together as a congregation prayerfully, with careful group discernment, being innocent as doves and wise as serpents (Mt 10:16).

Keith Weaver, LMC Moderator

This link to CDC guidelines provides additional, detailed guidelines for faith communities.

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/cdc-document-outlines-guidance-for-reopening-of-churches/>