



COVID-19 Guidance for Faith-Based Organizations to Stay Healthy

Faith-based organizations are places where individuals gather to share in their religious traditions. Unfortunately, germs are also shared and sickness can easily spread among congregations. The following guidance may help prevent congregational exposures to acute respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19.

Best Health Practices:

- Post hand washing signage throughout the faith-based facility. Downloadable posters are available at <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/posters.html>
- Actively encourage sick individuals to stay home:
 - Individuals who have symptoms of acute respiratory illness are recommended to stay home and not come to worship until they are free of fever (100.4° F [37.8° C] or greater using an oral thermometer), signs of a fever, and any other symptoms for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing or other symptom-altering medicines (e.g. cough suppressants).
 - Remind people is okay- even preferable- to miss faith-based activities (worship, religious education, etc.) if they or someone in their immediate family is ill. If they will not do it for themselves, remind them that this is an act of care to help keep others healthy.
 - Place posters that encourage staying home when sick, cough and sneeze etiquette, and hand hygiene throughout faith-based facilities in high traffic areas.
 - Provide tissues, garbage cans, and disinfecting hand gel throughout the faith-based facility.
- Perform routine environmental cleaning:
 - Routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces such as pews, hand rails, doorknobs, tables, and counter tops. Use the cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas and follow the directions on the label.
 - Provide disposable disinfecting wipes so that commonly used surfaces (for example, doorknobs, handrails, and pews) can be wiped down by individuals before each use.

Adapting Common Faith-Based Practices

- Handshakes and Hugs
 - Adapt your practice of physical goodwill gestures (i.e. “sharing the peace,” greeting time, etc.) to eliminate handshakes or hugs. Consider gestures of peace (model a peace sign, arms folded over heart, or hand-folded-in-prayer gesture), elbow bump, smile, or institute a song of peace instead of touching hands.
 - If it has been your practice to hold hands for a prayer, song or benediction, it would be a prudent time to introduce a new practice that does not involve physical touch.

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- Similarly, forego shaking hands in a greeting line after worship if that is your custom.
- Consider Eucharistic practices, and those which reduce the risk of transmission.
 - Have officiants and communion ministers sanitize their hands before serving.
 - Serve by intinction in which the communion minister dips the host or bread into the wine or juice and hands it to the communicant (not touching their hands).
 - Offer individual cups and pre-cut bread or host at stations, the server handing the bread to the communicant
- Consider Eucharistic practices, and those which reduce the risk of transmission.
 - Consider a different method for accepting money rather than passing an offering plate such as a tithe box, electronic acceptance, etc.

Food Service

- If you offer refreshment during coffee hour, or communal meals, have a host serve food to guests rather than having them self-serve from a large platter or buffet line.