



Risk Management Tip Sheet

Coronavirus: Safety Tips for Religious Organizations

Overview

With the spread of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) throughout the United States, many religious organizations are asking what they can do to ensure the safety of their employees and congregations. You are encouraged to review the guidance provided by the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) and the [World Health Organization](#), as well as applicable state, local, and diocesan guidelines. In addition, following are some tips you are encouraged to follow:

Prepare the Space for Church Members

- Clean hard surfaces with disposable wipes prior to any services or function. If you hold multiple services per day, clean and disinfect between gatherings.
- Limit the sharing of hymnals or bulletins by distributing the pertinent information electronically prior to services, or leaving a stack of photocopies at the entrance.
- Provide disposable wipes to community members, in case they wish to wipe down the area where they'll be seated.
- Supply congregants with alcohol-based hand sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol content) to use before entering the worship space and participating in Communion.
- Increase air circulation in the church by using fans or opening doors and windows, unless doing so puts children at risk.

Encourage Social Distancing Between Congregants

- Ask church members over the age of two to wear face coverings. Masks help protect other people from being exposed to the wearer's respiratory droplets.
- Discourage congregants from holding or shaking hands at any point during services. When passing the peace, church members should find alternatives to physical contact, such as bowing or waving. Parishioners who don't share households should stay six feet apart, including as they wait in line to take Communion and as they sit in pews.
- Tape or otherwise mark areas to provide a visual guide for keeping at least six feet apart. Consider blocking off every other row of seating and limiting the number of people who may sit in each area.
- Everyone should sanitize their hands prior to participating in Communion.
- Clergy are encouraged to wash their hands with soap and water before the Eucharist.

Spread the Word, Not the Virus

- Offer prayers for the sick, and ask any ill congregants (and family members) to stay home from services and other gatherings—even if their symptoms do not match COVID-19 symptoms, which include fever, cough, and shortness of breath.
- If you or others you know develop COVID-19 symptoms, prompt medical attention is strongly recommended.
- Share that these precautions are being taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Many behaviors are ingrained in congregants and clergy alike, so offer reminders throughout services about changes to usual procedures, such as not holding hands or even bumping elbows

As the Church and others continue to manage through this evolving situation, we remind you that being more cautious about person-to-person contact while COVID-19 is active will likely reduce the chances of its being spread throughout your church community.

We wish you all good health!

COVID-19 Resources

- Episcopal Relief & Development compiled helpful [information](#) from printed resources for church bulletins to liturgical resources.
- The CDC provides [information](#) about symptoms, transmissions, and recommendations for prevention.
- The CDC makes these [detailed recommendations](#) for communities of faith.
- The World Health Organization provides [updates](#) and information on the latest developments regarding COVID-19.
- View proper handwashing [techniques](#) from the CDC.