



Public Health
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Somerset County
Health Department

Somerset County Health Department

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Health Officer Lori Brewster, MS, APRN/BC, LCCDC

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Dear Faith Community Leaders,

As we enter Phase 1 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 be open to the general public provided that the number of persons permitted at any time does not exceed 50% of maximum occupancy (related to fire code or permits). I urge you to implement the recommendations issued by the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives that a workgroup of faith leaders across Maryland suggest. It can be found at <https://qoci.maryland.aov/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/05/Faith-Based-Recommendations.pdf>

Please consider these additional measures to ensure public health and safety:

- Face coverings are mandatory
- Refrain from choir or congregational singing
- Scheduling multiple shorter services
- Keep services virtual
- Use disposable communion sets
- Have hand sanitizer available throughout the building
- Refrain from physical contact such as hugging and shaking hands
- Allow children to remain with their parents. Nurseries and Sunday Schools can return as we move to a later Stage of Recovery
- Have offering collection at entrances to avoid passing the usual collection throughout the congregation.
- Limit greeters, ushers, and communion stewards who are at greater risk of contact.
- Provide one microphone per person and sanitize after every service.
- Require those who are ill or have been exposed to not attend the service and continue to participate virtually
- Hold services outside if possible
- Rope off every 3rd pew

Faith leaders may choose to implement stricter rules, and 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 443-523-1700.

For additional information on COVID-19, please refer to and share the Somerset County Health Department's website at <https://somersethealth.org>. Guidance for churches will be posted on the website on our Coronavirus page.

Thank you for your time and attention. Together we will weather these challenging times. We are #SomersetStrong.

Most sincerely,



Lori Brewster, MS, APRN/BC, LCCDC
Health Officer