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Health Officer

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RE: Guidance for Communities of Faith

Dear Faith Leaders:

As we move forward with allowing certain activities in our county, we must do so with measured steps to continue to protect the health of residents. Per the County Executive's Order, religious institutions will be allowed to have no more than 10 people inside a house of worship or any other facility at one time. The purpose is to allow individual ministry as needed. Religious services should not resume at this time, either inside or outside, as the risk is still too high to allow gatherings.

For the safety of staff and congregants, we strongly recommend implementing the following guidelines:

- Use virtual engagement tools such as live streaming or video conferencing.
- Provide congregants with spiritual and emotional care and counseling on a flexible or virtual basis or refer them to other available resources.
- Encourage other entities using the facilities to also follow this guidance.

Safety Actions

Promote Healthy Hygiene Practices

- Encourage use of cloth face covering when in the building.
- Have adequate supplies for healthy hygiene behaviors, including soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol (for staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer), tissues and no-touch trash cans.
- Post signs on how to stop the spread of COVID-19 and promote everyday protective measures (e.g., hand washing, covering coughs and sneezes, properly wearing face coverings).

Intensify Cleaning, Disinfection and Ventilation

- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily and shared objects between use.
- Avoid use of items that are not easily cleaned, sanitized or disinfected.
- Ensure safe and correct application of disinfectants and keep products away from children.
- Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air by using fans or opening windows and doors, if it does not pose a safety risk to children in the facility.
- Ensure all water systems and features (e.g., drinking and decorative fountains) are safe to use after a prolonged facility shutdown to minimize the risk of Legionnaires' disease and other water-associated diseases.

Train All Staff

- Train all clergy and staff in the above safety actions. Consider conducting virtual training. If in person, ensure that social distancing (6 feet or more) is maintained.

Sincerely,



Nilesh Kalyanaraman, M.D., F.A.C.P.
Health Officer