

## **Plan of Action in Response to a Congregant (or staff) Testing Positive for COVID-19**

### **A. World Health Organization (WHO) Definitions:**

1. **Quarantine** means restricting activities or separating people who are not ill themselves but may have been exposed to COVID-19. The goal is to prevent spread of the disease at the time when people just develop symptoms.<sup>1</sup>
2. To **self-quarantine** means to separate yourself from others because you have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 even though you, yourself, do not have symptoms. During self-quarantine you monitor yourself for symptoms. The goal of the self-quarantine is to prevent transmission.<sup>1</sup>
3. **Isolation** means separating people who are ill with symptoms of COVID-19 and may be infectious to prevent the spread of the disease.<sup>1</sup>
4. **Close contact** means that you live with or have been in settings of less than 1 metre from those who have the disease. In these cases, it is best to stay at home.<sup>1</sup>
5. The time between exposure to COVID-19 and the moment when symptoms start is commonly around five to six days but can range from **1 – 14 days**.<sup>1</sup>

### **B. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Public Health Guidance for Community-Related Exposure:**

1. **Exposure:** Refers to an “Individual who has had close contact (< 6 feet) for ≥15 minutes”<sup>2</sup>
2. While research indicates masks may help those who are infected from spreading the infection, there is less information regarding whether masks offer any protection for a contact exposed to a symptomatic or asymptomatic patient. Therefore, the determination of close contact should be made irrespective of whether the person with COVID-19 or the contact was wearing a mask.<sup>2</sup>
3. Stay home until 14 days after last exposure and maintain social distance (at least 6 feet) from others at all times<sup>2</sup>
4. Self-monitor for symptoms<sup>2</sup>
5. Avoid contact with [people at higher risk for severe illness](#) from COVID-19<sup>2</sup>
6. Follow [CDC guidance](#) if symptoms develop<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>WHO Q &A on COVID-19; 17 April 2020; <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/question-and-answers-hub/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses>

<sup>2</sup>CDC Coronavirus Disease 2019; 31 July 2020; <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/public-health-recommendations.html>

## Additional References Specific to Communities of Faith

### A. CDC Considerations for Communities of Faith Monitoring and Preparing:

1. Notify local health officials if a person diagnosed with COVID-19 has been in the facility and communicate with staff and congregants about potential exposure while maintaining confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or other applicable laws and in accordance with religious practices.<sup>3</sup>
2. Advise those with [exposure](#) to a person diagnosed with COVID-19 to [stay home and self-monitor](#) for symptoms, and follow [CDC guidance](#) if symptoms develop.<sup>3</sup>
3. Close off areas used by the [sick](#) person and do not use the area until after cleaning and disinfection. Ensure [safe and correct application](#) of disinfectants and keep disinfectant products away from children.<sup>3</sup>
4. Advise staff and congregants with [symptoms](#) of COVID-19 or who have tested positive for COVID-19 not to return to the facility until they have met CDC's [criteria to discontinue home isolation](#).<sup>3</sup>

### B. Susquehanna Conference United Methodist Church:

1. Limit gatherings (worship, fellowship, and other) to 25 people inside. Large gatherings outside 250.<sup>4</sup>
2. Maintain six-foot distances between each person. This includes bathrooms and hallways. Mark off space in the pews using ropes, ribbons, painter's tape, or other methods, if that will help.<sup>4</sup>
3. **Pennsylvania State Guideline for Churches:**
  1. The Governor of Pennsylvania website has scaled back limitations for the faith communities.
  4. The Governor of Pennsylvania website site displays a direct link to the CDC website.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup>CDC Coronavirus Disease Considerations for Communities of Faith; 23 May 2020; <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/faith-based.html>

<sup>4</sup> SUMC Church Reopening Guidelines During COVID-19 Pandemic Green Phase; 5 May 2020; <https://www.susumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Church-Reopening-Guidelines-During-COVID-19.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Pennsylvania Government COVID-19 Guidance and Resources; 10Aug 2020; [www.governor.pa.gov/covid-19](http://www.governor.pa.gov/covid-19).

## **Church Plan of Action in Response to a Congregant (or staff) Testing Positive for COVID-19**

### **A. Actions to be taken**

1. The Administrative Board Chairman will designate a person that will be responsible for notifying local health officials if a person diagnosed with COVID-19 was in the facility at a time when they were potentially infectious.
2. The Pastor or designee will notify the District Superintendent.
3. The Administrative Board Chairman will designate a person that will be responsible for communicating to staff and congregants that they were in the facility with a potentially infectious individual. The designee will discuss the following topics:
  - a. The communication will stress that they could be at risk for an exposure. The identity of the potentially infectious individual will not be disclosed.
  - b. If individuals believe they had an exposure (had close contact {< 6 feet} for ≥15 minutes),<sup>2</sup> they are advised to self-quarantine (separate yourself from others because you have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 even though you, yourself, do not have symptoms. During self-quarantine you monitor yourself for symptoms).<sup>1</sup>
  - c. Since the identity of the potentially infectious individual is to remain confidential, individuals must determine if they did not comply with the charge's physical distancing policy and were within 6 feet of another individual (not living in their household) for >15 minutes.
  - d. If the individual being notified has any questions that are not covered in this policy, they are to be advised to contact their health care provider for additional information.
4. After the discovery of a COVID-19 attendee, the building will be closed for use until all areas have been cleaned and disinfected.
5. Advise staff and congregants with symptom of COVID-19 or those who have tested positive for COVID-19 to follow the CDC guidelines for information on when it is safe for them to discontinue self-isolation.

### **I. Summary**

The precautions adopted by the (church) Charge Council that are necessary due to the COVID-19 pandemic to reduce the spread of the virus require attendees (not living in the same household) to maintain a distance of more than 6 feet from others. Since an exposure (as defined by the CDC) is possible when individuals are within 6 feet from each other for >15 minutes and one of the individuals subsequently develops symptoms of or tests positive for COVID-19, compliance with our physical distancing policy would greatly limit exposures. Therefore, only individuals that cannot be certain that they complied with the physical distancing policy might be considered at an increased risk for exposure when an attendee subsequently develops symptoms of or tests positive for COVID-19.

In the event that a congregant determines that they may have had or did have an exposure to an individual that tested positive for COVID-19 that did not occur at the church, The church will not be required to follow the steps outlined in section III. In this case, congregants should monitor themselves for symptoms as they would normally.

The church will perform a thorough cleaning and disinfection of the facility if an attendee develops symptoms or test positive for COVID-19. All efforts will be made to complete cleaning and disinfection of the facility in order to prevent cancellations.

In the event that the Pastor cannot or chooses not to be present for in-person worship due to issues related to COVID-19, there will be an Order of Worship and Sermon material prepared by the Worship Coordinator available for use. The liturgy will be taken from the appropriate Sunday's

lectionary on <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning>. An on-topic video sermon will be researched and provided to the Pastor for her review.

The church will follow orders to suspend in person worship as directed by the Bishop of the Susquehanna Conference or the District Superintendent.

The Administrative board will designate an individual to review CDC and State regulations for updates and to modify this policy accordingly. Review/update will be completed by the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month. Board members will be notified of changes and voted upon as deemed necessary by the Chairman and/or Pastor. All changes to policy approved by Ad Board will be maintained in a Change Log attached to the Policy, with date change made, date approved by Ad Board, and the Change itself.

**SUGGESTED CONTROL/COMMUNICATION DOCUMENTS**

Person Responsible for Control, Communication: \_\_\_\_\_

**POSITIVE TEST LOG**

DATE OF POSITIVE TEST: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE OF CHURCH EVENT: \_\_\_\_\_ # IN ATTENDANCE \_\_\_\_\_

Upon Notice that	Attendee tests Positive	For COVID-19
ACTION	COMPLETED BY	DATE
Notify Local Health Officials		
Notify the York D.S.		
Notify Staff & Congregants		
All areas cleaned/disinfected		
Notify COVID patient to follow CDC guidelines		

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DATE OF POSITIVE TEST: \_\_\_\_\_

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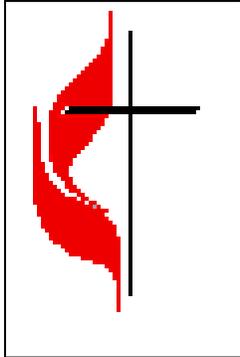
**Person Responsible for Review of CDC and State regulations and Policy Updates:**

\_\_\_\_\_

<b>Date Review of CDC/State Regulations Complete</b>	<b>Policy Change Recommended</b>	<b>Date Policy Change Approved by Mt. Nebo Administrative Board</b>

# Sample Notice Letter to Congregants with Possible Exposure

(from Attendance Records)



Church

Address

Pastor

Phone

## DATE OF NOTICE:

As mandated by (church name) COVID-19 Plan of Action, it has been determined that a person who is potentially infectious was in the (church) facility on (DATE).

Because you were in attendance on this date, you could be at risk for an exposure to the virus. The identity of the potentially infectious individual will not be disclosed.

If you believe that you had an exposure (had close contact {less than 6 feet} for more than 15 minutes), you are advised to self-quarantine (separate yourself from others because you have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 even though you, yourself, do not have symptoms. During self-quarantine you monitor yourself for symptoms).

Since the identity of the potentially infectious individual is to remain confidential, you must determine if you did not comply with the Charge's physical distancing policy and were within 6 feet of another individual (not living in your household) for more than 15 minutes.

If you have any questions that are not covered in this policy, you are advised to contact your health care provider for additional information.

Because there has been the discovery of a COVID-19 attendee, the building will be closed for use until all areas have been cleaned and disinfected **which will occur before the next Sunday.**

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Signature of Designated Person

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