



MORAVIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA, SOUTHERN PROVINCE

Provincial Elders' Conference

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May 13, 2020

To: Pastors, Fellowship Coordinators, Church Boards
From: Provincial Elders' Conference
Re: Health and Safety Precautions for Church Offices

This memo is in addition to the April 27 and May 7 PEC memos focused on “Reopening” Church Events and Activities.

It is primarily intended for congregations and fellowships in NC, based on the May 5 executive order of the Governor. However, this information may be helpful to congregations and fellowships in other states. For those groups we advise reviewing and following any directives from state and local civil authorities that may apply to places of business and/or church facilities.

The NC Governor’s order (Phase 1) allows reopening of most businesses, under certain guidelines for health and safety. Strictly speaking, churches are not “businesses”. However, church facilities are work places, and should operate according to the guidelines, for the health and safety of church staff and employees, as well as those who may be visiting church offices.

We still strongly recommend that, at least until North Carolina enters Phase 2 of the reopening process that:

- Church staff continue to work from home as much as possible. Other than paid staff or volunteer staff with specific essential responsibilities, members should not be inside church facilities.
- Church meetings (boards, committees, Bible studies, fellowships, etc.) continue to utilize technology to meet remotely.
- Those over the age of 65, those with underlying health conditions, and those with weakened immune systems remain at home as much as possible.

FOR WORKING IN THE CHURCH OFFICE

- These “*Recommendations to Promote Social Distancing and Reduce Transmission*” in the Governor’s order apply to anyone leaving their home to engage in “allowable activities, and should be in place for all church activities, including working in the church office:
 1. Maintain at least six (6) feet social distancing from other individuals, with the exception of family or household members.
 2. Wear a cloth Face Covering when leaving home and wear it inside all public settings such as grocery stores, pharmacies, or other retail or public-serving businesses. A Face Covering should also be worn outdoors when you cannot maintain at least six (6) feet distancing from other people with the exception of family or household members. These coverings function to protect other people more than the wearer.
 3. Carry hand sanitizer with you when leaving home, and use it frequently.

4. Wash hands using soap and water for at least twenty (20) seconds as frequently as possible.
5. Regularly clean high-touch surfaces such as steering wheels, wallets, phones.
6. Stay at home if sick.
- The following “*Recommendations for All Businesses (Retail or Other)*” are strongly encouraged:
 1. Continue to promote telework and limit non-essential travel whenever possible.
 2. Promote social distancing by reducing the number of people coming to the office, by providing six (6) feet of distance between desks, and/or by staggering shifts.
 3. Limit face-to-face meetings to no more than ten (10) workers.
 4. Promote hygiene, including frequent hand-washing and use of hand sanitizer.
 5. Recommend workers wear cloth Face Coverings; provide workers with Face Coverings; and provide information on proper use, removal, and washing of cloth Face Coverings. A Face Covering functions to protect other people more than the wearer.
 6. Make accommodations for workers who are at high risk of severe illness from COVID-19, for example, by having high-risk workers work in positions that are not public-facing or by allowing teleworking where possible.
 7. Encourage sick workers to stay home and provide support to do so with a sick leave policy.
 8. Follow the CDC guidance if a worker has been diagnosed with COVID-19.
 9. Provide workers with education about COVID-19 prevention strategies, using methods like videos, webinars, or FAQs.
 10. Promote information on helplines for workers such as 211 and the Hope4NC Helpline.

FOR WELCOMING VISITORS TO CHURCH OFFICES

While churches are not “retail businesses”, we do welcome the public to our offices, and may have individuals visiting our facilities for a variety of reasons. What follows is adapted from the “*Requirements Specific to Retail Businesses*” and are strongly encouraged:

1. Limit occupancy so that visitors and staff can stay six (6) feet apart, even if this requires reducing occupancy.
2. Direct visitors to stay at least six (6) feet apart from one another and from church staff.
3. Mark six (6) feet of spacing in other high-traffic areas such as waiting areas where visitors may gather.
4. Ask visitors to wear cloth face coverings of their own, and provide disposable face coverings for those who do not have them. These coverings function to protect other people more than the wearer.
5. Perform frequent and routine environmental cleaning and disinfection of high-touch areas with an EPA-approved disinfectant for SARS-Co V-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19).
6. Provide hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol); systematically and frequently check and refill hand sanitizer stations; and provide soap and hand drying materials at sinks.
7. Post signage at the main entrances that reminds people to stay six (6) feet apart for social distancing, requests people who are or who have recently been symptomatic not to enter, and notifies visitors of the building’s capacity.

Of all places in our communities, church facilities should be “safe spaces” where the health and well-being of staff, visitors, and those we serve are of primary importance.

During this COVID-19 pandemic, the precautions and extra measures we are taking are part of our witness to the community, as well as the hospitality we are called to extend to everyone.

Our friends in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) included the following in suggested *Prayers for Times of Public Health Concern*” *COVID-19/Coronavirus*

God, our peace and our strength, we pray for our nation and the world as we face new uncertainties around coronavirus. Protect the most vulnerable among us, especially all who are currently sick or in isolation. Grant wisdom, patience, and clarity to health care workers, especially as their work caring for others puts them at great risk. Guide us as we consider how best to prepare and respond in our families, congregations, workplaces, and communities. Give us courage to face these days not with fear but with compassion, concern, and acts of service, trusting that you abide with us always; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen¹

The Provincial Elders’ Conference

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