

# LEBANON VALLEY CHURCH OF CHRIST

Returning to In-person Church Services  
During **COVID-19**



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# RETURNING TO IN-PERSON CHURCH SERVICES DURING COVID-19

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## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

From the very beginnings of the church, Christians worshipped together through prayer, instruction, and “breaking bread” to remember Jesus. An early summary of church life tells us that *“Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home, and ate their food with glad and generous hearts”* (Acts 2:46). For almost 2000 years Christians have continued to gather. We have gathered in all kinds of venues both publicly and secretly. We met in person until we could no longer do so and still obey the greatest commands of love. In March of this year because of COVID-19, and in order to love God and love our neighbor, we started to meet remotely via the internet.

A love-filled response for gathering is much more than unlocking the church doors and inviting all to come back to sit, sing, commune, pray, listen, give and greet one another as had been our practice. We must love one another and care enough not to let that happen without precautions in place. **In love, we want to do everything we can to make sure we bring no harm to anyone through our gatherings.** That spirit, in and of itself, is worshipping God. To that end, this document describes our plan for re-opening the church building and gathering again in-person.

As long as we are permitted by state and local government and the situation remains stable, we will begin to gather again within the practice of these guidelines. Unfortunately, it appears that the pandemic will be our reality for an undetermined period of time, so our plans and guidelines will be reviewed and amended as the situation surrounding COVID 19 evolves.

## GUIDELINES

The health and well-being of our members and visitors at the Lebanon Valley church of Christ are at the forefront of the policies and protocols the church has established in response to COVID-19.

All members and visitors of the Lebanon Valley Church of Christ will be asked to follow the guidelines outlined in this handbook as part of the church's plan to welcome our members and visitors back to in-person services as safely as possible.

### Symptom Monitoring Requirement

All those attending **services, or any meetings** in the church building must be **free from a recent onset of ANY symptoms** potentially related to COVID-19.

Currently these symptoms include one or more of the following:

- Cough
- Shortness of Breath or difficulty breathing
- Fever (100.4° or higher)
- Chills or repeated shaking with chills
- Runny nose or new sinus congestion
- Muscle pain
- Headache

- Sore throat
- Fatigue
- Upper gastrointestinal issues
- New loss of taste or smell

If you have any symptoms, you should stay home and call your healthcare provider and follow their instructions. You should also wear a face mask to avoid possible virus transmission to others.

An infrared thermometer has been purchased and is available for use prior to entering the church building if interested.

According to the CDC, individuals with **certain conditions** may have a **higher risk** for COVID-19 infection. Those conditions may include:

- Individuals aged 65 years and older
- Liver Disease
- Chronic Lung Disease or moderate to severe asthma
- Diabetes
- Serious Heart Conditions
- Chronic kidney disease treated with dialysis
- Severe obesity (BMI of 40 or higher)
- Those immunocompromised (cancer treatment, smoking, bone marrow or organ transplantation, immune deficiencies, HIV/AIDS, prolonged use of corticosteroids or other immune weakening medications)

The Pennsylvania Department of Health recommends that those traveling from the follow States self-quarantine for 14 days.

<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Travelers.aspx> r If you have traveled to one of these States, please self-quarantine for 14 days before attending in-person church services.

## **Sunday Morning Bible Study, Children's Worship & Nursery Services**

**Sunday morning Bible Study** at the church building and **Children's Worship** have been temporarily paused. The **Nursery** will be open for use as needed, however the toys will be removed temporarily for sanitation purposes. The **Fellowship Room** will be available for use. Upstairs classrooms will be temporarily closed. Parents are encouraged to bring books and toys back and forth from home.

## **Wednesday Evening Bible Study and "Lunch with Brad"**

**Wednesday evening Bible Study** and **"Lunch with Brad"** will continue remotely until further notice. Information to join these programs is shared weekly in the Bulletin.

## Sunday Morning Services

**In-person services will resume at the Church Building on Sunday August 2, 2020.**

Services will **begin at 10:30am** and will **end at approximately 11:15am**. The service will also be **live streamed** to continue to provide members with a **remote worship option**. If you or your family are not yet comfortable attending Sunday morning services in-person, please do continue to worship with us remotely until you feel comfortable to attend in-person services.

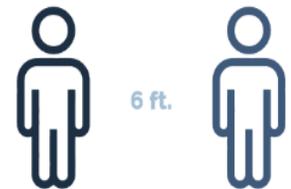
### Building Sanitation

- The church building will continue on its regular cleaning schedule and will also be sanitized after each use.
- Songbooks and Bibles have been removed from the auditorium for sanitation purposes. Please try to bring a Bible from home. However, if you need a Bible or forget your Bible, feel free to use one located in the Fellowship Room. After use, please return it to the long table in front of the kitchen in the Fellowship Room for cleaning purposes.
- Temporarily, the coffee pot will not be in operation. Please feel free to bring a beverage from home.
- Sunday Bulletins will continue to be distributed weekly online, A few bulletins will be provided for visitors and those leading worship.

### Physical Distancing

Keeping physical space between you and others will help avoid exposure to COVID-19 and slow its spread. Since people can spread the virus before they know they are sick, it is important to keep your distance from others when possible, even if you have no symptoms. Physical distancing is important for everyone and protects those who are at higher risk of getting very sick. Everyone should follow the following physical distancing practices:

- **Always stay at least 6 feet** (about 2 arms' length) **from others**
- Try not gather in groups
- Stay out of crowds and avoid large gatherings
- **Avoid contact** and handshaking



### Entering and Exiting the Building

Both the front door and back door will be open for use.

### Seating

Some of the chairs have been removed from the auditorium to provide for physical distancing. All members should practice physical distancing by ensuring there is space between singles and/or family units. If you need help finding a seat or moving a seat, someone will be available to assist you.

## Singing

Based on scientific information, COVID-19 is spread through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks. Several studies have found that forceful, sustained breathing, such as when singing, could pose a greater danger of spreading the coronavirus than ordinary speaking at a low volume.

At the same time, singing is a form of worship and a means of connecting with God and one another. We will continue to project the songs on the screen, just as we have been doing while worshipping remotely, and encourage you to sing along at a lower volume.

## Order of Service

### The Welcome & Greeting

A pre-recorded welcome will appear on the screen at the start of worship. The physical contact greeting will unfortunately be suspended.

### The Prayer of Thanksgiving

The "Prayer of Thanksgiving" and Bible Reading will be performed by the same person.

### Communion

Communion meditation and prayers will be led from the pulpit.

**Self-contained, enclosed, communion portions** that have communion bread and the juice in one unit will be available for you to **pick up as you enter the building** at the front door or the back door. There are both regular and gluten-free versions available.

Please remember to deposit your empty communion container in one of the trash receptacles placed near the exits before leaving the building.

### The Offering

Thank you for continuing to support our church and our ministry. Those who have been giving online may continue to do so. Those who prefer to give cash or check may place it in an offering receptacle provided as you leave the building.

### The Sermon

Brad plans to shorten sermons to about 20 minutes in length. The entire service should be completed in 45 minutes.

### Elder Prayer / Closing Prayer

An Elder will lead the closing prayer combined with thanksgiving for the offering and the intercessory prayer usually recited after the Bible Reading. The Elder will also give the closing declaration to **"Go Teach, Live and Love like Jesus."**

## Best Practices

### Handwashing & Hand Sanitizer

Both restrooms will remain open. Remember to wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, sneezing, or touching your face. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth, and wash your hands after touching your face. Hand sanitizer will be available throughout the building and in both restrooms.

### Face Masks

Face masks or face coverings **must** be worn by all members and visitors while in the church building. The appropriate use of face masks or coverings is critical in minimizing risks to others near you. You could spread COVID-19 to others even if you do not feel sick. The mask or cloth face covering is not a substitute for physical distancing. Those with medical issues preventing them to wear a mask safely will not be required to wear a mask. Also, those serving from the pulpit will temporarily remove their masks while speaking or praying.

All members and visitors are expected to provide their own face coverings/face masks. Disposable masks will be available if a face covering/face mask has been misplaced or forgotten.

### Coughing/Sneezing Hygiene

Remember to always cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, or use the inside of your elbow. Throw used tissues in the trash. Immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, clean your hands with a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.



### If you have COVID-19 Symptoms

**If you have a fever (100.4° or higher), cough or other COVID-19 symptoms, call your healthcare provider and stay home.**

- **If your condition worsens or you have trouble breathing, get medical attention right away.**
- Keep track of your symptoms.

- Most people with COVID-19 have mild illness and can recover at home without medical care.
- Take care of yourself. **Get rest and stay hydrated.** Take over the counter medicine, such as acetaminophen, to help you feel better.
- While at home, separate yourself from others as much as possible. Stay in a specific room and away from other people and pets. If possible, you should use a separate bathroom. If you need to be around others in your home, wear a face covering.
- Follow all good hygiene practices.
- Avoid sharing personal household items.
- Clean all "high touch" surfaces every day.
- Please do not return to church until 14 days after being symptom free.
- **Call Brad Carman or one of the Elders for questions or assistance if needed.**

## **If you have tested positive for COVID-19**

### **If you have tested positive for COVID-19 you can return to church after:**

1. You have had no fever for at least 72 hours (three full days of no fever **without** the use of medicine that reduces fevers)  
**AND**
2. other symptoms have improved (for example, when your cough or shortness of breath have improved)  
**AND**
3. at least 10 days have passed since your symptoms first appeared.  
**AND**
4. you are cleared by your healthcare provider.

\*\*In all cases, **follow the guidance of your doctor and local health department.** The decision to stop home isolation should be made in consultation with your healthcare provider and state and local health departments. Some people, for example those with conditions that weaken their immune system, might continue to shed virus even after they recover.

## **Contact Tracing**

In the extremely unfortunate event that a member or visitor who has attended in-person services becomes ill with COVID-19, we will confidentially notify those who may have had contact with that person while attending church services. Visitors will be asked to fill out a **Visitors Card** for this purpose, as well as for the purpose for us to get to know them better.

## Your Emotional Wellbeing

We know that this is an incredibly stressful time for our church family as well as our entire community and world. People manifest stress in many different ways. If you need help, please do not hesitate to reach out to Brad Carman or the Elders. Brad and the Elders would like to pray with you or offer other assistance. **You are not alone!**

*July 20, 2020 (ACH)*

*(Adapted from the Duke University, "Guide for Returning to the Workplace", May 13, 2020)*