



Messiah Lutheran Church

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

New York Forward Safety Plan

PURPOSE

Per New York Forward reopening plan requirements, "Each business or entity, including those that have been designated as essential under Empire State Development's Essential Business Guidance, must develop a written Safety Plan outlining how its workplace will prevent the spread of COVID-19." This document serves as the reopening plan for Messiah Lutheran Church and has been created based on the NY Forward Safety Plan Template and relevant guidance from New York State, the Center for Disease Control, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. This document clarifies how all physical activities of Messiah Lutheran Church will take place as long as the Capital Region remains in Phase 4 of New York Forward and will be reviewed on a monthly basis by the Congregation Council. This congregation further supports the work of the Pastor in convening other faith leaders to work in greater partnership with the Schenectady County Public Health Department in stopping the spread of COVID-19.

If the Capital Region of New York rises above a [3% percent positivity rate](#) (7-day average), all in-person events other than food pantry and activities necessary for the conduct of virtual worship shall be suspended at a minimum of one-week. Food pantry and virtual worship volunteers are required to conduct their activities in a manner required by New York State law.

BUSINESS INFORMATION

Legal Name of Business: Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Messiah

Industry: Nonprofit, House of Worship

Address: 2850 Guilderland Avenue, Schenectady, NY 12306

Contact Information: 518.355.2311 or office@messiahschenectady.org

Manager of Business: Rev. Dustin G. Wright, Senior Pastor

Human Resources Representative: Sue Collins, Vice President & Pamela Ford, Personnel Chair

PEOPLE

A. Physical Distancing

- Most regular Sunday and Holy Day services will be conducted in a primarily virtual manner. No attendees will be permitted to attend these services outside of minimum staff and volunteers needed to produce the service, except in the case of celebrations of baptisms and other life passages, which will generally be conducted outside. In case of inclement weather, baptisms and other life passages may be conducted inside the narthex.

- For occasional outdoor regular Sunday worship services scheduled by the Worship & Music Ministry Team and other types of outdoor events, the attendee capacity will allow for six feet of social distancing in the Parish Yard.
- Six feet of distance will be maintained amongst all employees, volunteers, and/or attendees at all times, unless safety of the core activity requires a shorter distance (e.g. pallbearing) or the individuals are members of the same household.
- Singing will only be permitted by soloists at a minimum of twelve feet of distance from other individuals.
- Face coverings must be worn by all employees, volunteers, and/or attendees at indoor events when it is possible that unvaccinated individuals are present in the building. If a “mask break” is needed by anyone, they are asked to isolate themselves from others when their mask is removed.
- Face coverings must be worn by all employees, volunteers, and/or attendees at outdoor events when it is not possible to maintain six feet of social distance amongst members of different households. If a “mask break” is needed by anyone, they are asked to isolate themselves from others when their mask is removed.
- Acceptable face coverings to protect against COVID-19 include but are not limited to cloth-based face coverings and disposable masks that cover both the mouth and nose.
- All utilized areas will be disinfected between uses.
- Signs will be posted on entrance doors, throughout the building and by the Parish Yard entrance reminding staff, volunteers and attendees to:
 - Properly store and, when necessary, discard PPE.
 - Adhere to physical distancing instructions.
 - Report symptoms of or exposure to COVID-19, and how they should do so.
 - Follow hand hygiene and cleaning and disinfection guidelines.
 - Follow appropriate respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette.

B. Types of Activities

- Most regular Sunday and Holy Day Worship & Music programs will be conducted virtually in a manner as described above.
- Special Worship and Music programs and occasional regular Sunday worship services may be conducted outside and in-person in the Parish Yard in the manner described above with approval from the Pastor and the Worship & Music Ministry Team.
- All Faith Formation, Fellowship and Social Action events, as well as other types of meetings and gatherings can be conducted inside or outside and in-person in the manner described above.

PLACES

A. Protective Equipment

- Acceptable face coverings will be provided for employees while at work at no cost to the employee. An adequate supply of face coverings, masks and other required personal protective equipment (PPE) will be on hand by the main entrance and entrance to the Parish Yard should an employee need a replacement, or should a visitor or attendee be in need. Acceptable face coverings include, but are not limited to, cloth (e.g. homemade sewn, quick cut, bandana) and surgical masks.
- When all employees, volunteers and attendees are required to wear face coverings, they will do so in a manner that completely covers the nose and mouth unless doing so would be contrary to the individual's health or safety due to medical a condition, or if the attendee is under two years old.
- Face coverings must be cleaned or replaced after use and may not be shared.
- Ushers, altar guild members, food pantry volunteers and all others closely interacting with the public will be required to wear disposable gloves.

B. Hygiene, Cleaning, and Disinfection

- Adherence to hygiene, cleaning and disinfection requirements as advised by the CDC and DOH will be required. Recording the date, time, and scope of cleaning and disinfection is required.
- Hand hygiene stations on site will be provided as follows, as follows:
 - For handwashing: soap, running warm water, and disposable paper towels.
 - For sanitizer: an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol for areas where handwashing facilities may not be available or practical.
 - Hand sanitizer will be placed throughout the location for use by all attending or working. It will be placed in convenient locations such as points of entrance/exit.
- Receptacles will be placed around the building for disposal of soiled items, including PPE.
- Appropriate cleaning and disinfection supplies for shared and frequently touched surface will be provided. Participants will be encouraged to use these supplies before and after use of these surfaces, followed by hand hygiene.
- Regular cleaning and disinfection of the location or facility and more frequent cleaning and disinfection for high risk areas used by many individuals and for frequently touched surfaces will take place. Cleaning and disinfection must be rigorous and ongoing and must occur at least after each service in line with the DOH's "Interim Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfection of Public and Private Facilities for COVID-19."
- Regular cleaning and disinfection of restrooms will take place. Restrooms should be cleaned and disinfected more often depending on frequency of use.

- Shared objects will be regularly disinfected using registered disinfectants, including at least between services.
- The cleaning and disinfection of exposed areas in the event of a positive case of COVID-19, with such cleaning and disinfection to include, at a minimum, all heavy transit areas and high-touch surfaces will take place.
- CDC guidelines on “Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility” if someone is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 infection are as follows:
 - Close off areas used by the person who is sick.
 - Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the area.
 - Wait 24 hours before you clean or disinfect. If 24 hours is not feasible, wait as long as possible.
 - Clean and disinfect all areas used by the person who is sick, such as offices, bathrooms, common areas, and shared equipment.
 - Once the area has been appropriately disinfected, it can be opened for use.
 - Anyone without close or proximate contact with the person who is sick can return to the area immediately after disinfection.

D. Phased Reopening

- As COVID-19 guidelines ease and the pandemic progresses, Messiah will phase-in reopening activities so as to allow for operational issues to be resolved before in person programming returns to normal levels.

C. Communications Plan

- To enter the premises or the building, staff members, volunteers and attendees must affirm that they have reviewed and understand these guidelines, and that they will implement them.
- A communications plan will be developed for employees, volunteers, or congregants, that includes applicable instructions, training, signage, and a consistent means to provide staff members with information.

PROCESSES

A. Screening and Testing

- For all indoor gatherings, staff members, volunteers and attendees will be screened using the following questions:
 - Have you knowingly been in close or proximate contact in the past 14 days with anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19 or who has or had symptoms of COVID-19?
 - Have you tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 14 days; and/or experienced any symptoms of COVID-19 in the past 14 days?
 - Have you traveled from a state in the past 14 days that was or is under New York’s travel advisory?
 - Do you agree to abide by the guidelines outlined in Messiah’s New York Forward Safety Plan?

- Screeners will be provided with PPE, including at a minimum, a face mask and gloves. If a person screens positive for COVID-19 symptoms at an in-person event, that person will not be allowed to enter the premises and will be sent home with instructions to contact their healthcare provider for assessment and testing.
- All positive responses to the screening process will be reviewed on a daily basis and a record of such review will be maintained.
- Messiah's Parish Administrator will be the party listed for individuals to inform if they later are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, as noted in the questionnaire.
- For each indoor gathering a Safety Team will be visibly identified. Their responsibilities will include checking everyone in and encouraging all attendees to maintain continuous compliance with all aspects of this site safety plan.
- To the extent possible, Messiah will maintain a log of every person, including employees and visitors entering the building for indoor gatherings. Unknown guests will be asked for basic contact information so that all attendees may be traced and notified in the event an employee, volunteer, or attendee is diagnosed with COVID-19.
- Messiah will cooperate with state and local health department contact tracing efforts.

B. Tracing and Tracking

- Our state and local health department will be immediately notified upon Messiah being informed of any positive COVID-19 test result by an employee or faith leader at our site. In the case of an employee or faith leader testing positive, Messiah will cooperate with the state and local health department to trace all contacts in the workplace and notify the state and local health department of all employees and visitors who entered the site dating back to 48 hours before the employee began experiencing COVID-19 symptoms or tested positive, whichever is earlier, but maintain confidentiality as required by federal and state law and regulations.
- Individuals who are alerted that they have come into close or proximate contact with a person with COVID-19, and have been alerted via tracing, tracking or other mechanism, will be reminded that they are required to self-report to their employer at the time of alert and shall follow the protocol referenced above.

This COVID-19 Reopening Plan will be posted in visible places throughout the Messiah building and made available to any staff member, volunteer or attendee at their request.