



# 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 and in conversation with our sister congregation of Trinity Reformed Church. 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. Every revision of this document will be referred by the Pastor to Schenectady County Public Health Department for further review. 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.

On October 6th, 2020, New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo announced a new "cluster action initiative" to address COVID-19 hotspots that cropped up in various areas of New York. The initiative identifies COVID-19 hotspots by geographic area as COVID-19 "micro clusters" and implements additional restrictions beyond Phase 4 of New York Forward on a yellow, orange and red sliding scale of severity. If Messiah Lutheran Church is declared to be in a "yellow zone" micro-cluster or higher, all in-person events other than food pantry and activities necessary for the conduct of virtual worship shall be suspended at a minimum for one-week from the day Messiah was declared within a micro-cluster. Food pantry and virtual worship volunteers are required to conduct their activities in a manner required by the new "cluster action initiative" and 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, Pastor

*Human Resources Representative:* Pete Jones, President & Pamela Ford, Personnel Chair

#### **PEOPLE**

##### **A. Physical Distancing**

- All 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 with immediate family and a presider in the narthex while other family and friends are invited to watch from the porch over the front entrance.

- For special outdoor worship services and fellowship events, the attendee capacity will be 50 individuals or 50% of the regular capacity of the Parish Yard, whichever is lower, depending on the size of households attending and social distancing requirements.
- 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 all times whether inside or outside the premises. If a “mask break” is needed by anyone, they are asked to isolate themselves from others when their mask is removed.
- Access to all indoor spaces will be limited to necessary employees and volunteers, including the use of restrooms.
- Each restroom will become a single occupant, all-gender restroom to facilitate traffic flow.
- 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.
- For special outdoor worship services and fellowship events, all attendees will enter the Parish Yard from the Guilderland Avenue Parking Lot and exist through the Parsonage Front Yard. Stakes will be placed twelve feet apart indicating where households may stand or sit together using their own lawn chairs. Households will be asked to fill in spots closest to the Parsonage Front Yard first in order to minimize bi-directional foot traffic.
- 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.
  - Prohibit holding or shaking hands of members of different households during services or prayers.

## **B. Types of Activities**

- All regular Sunday and Holy Day Worship & Music programs will be conducted virtually in a manner as described above.
- Special Worship and Music programs 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 programs will be conducted virtually.
- Most Fellowship programs will be conducted virtually. Special Fellowship programs may be conducted outside and in-person in the Parish Yard in the manner described above with approval from the Pastor and the Fellowship Ministry Team. At no time may food or beverages be served at in-person fellowship programs outside of what is brought by attendees for their own households. Offsite Fellowship programming may be conducted in a manner consistent with social distancing principles as outlined in this document and in line with the requirements of the site where the activity is taking place with approval from the Pastor and the Fellowship Ministry Team.
- Social Action programs will be conducted virtually when possible. The Bread of Life Food Pantry will continue operating under a “drive-up” model. Offsite Social Action programming may be conducted in a manner consistent with social distancing principles as outlined in this document and in line with the requirements of the site where the activity is taking place with approval from the Pastor and the Social Action Ministry Team.
- All meetings will be conducted preferably virtually on Zoom or at minimum in a virtual/in-person hybrid manner. For the purposes of this document, “necessary employees and volunteers” are defined as those individuals who need to be physically present to facilitate the types of activities listed above, including committee members who may not have access to Zoom. When an in-person option for a meeting is needed by a committee member, the relevant committee chair and/ or member will contact the Pastor beforehand in order to facilitate proper health precautions.

## **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.
- All employees and attendees will wear face coverings that completely cover the nose and mouth unless doing so would be contrary to the individual's health or safety due to a medical 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**

- At the entrance to the Parish Yard, all 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 in-person event a Safety Team will be visibly identified. Their responsibilities will include continuous compliance with all aspects of this site safety plan will be identified.
- To the extent possible, Messiah will maintain a log of every person, including employees and visitors, who may have close or proximate contact with other individuals at the gathering site or area. This will be done primarily through regular use

of Messiah's security cameras, especially for in-person, outdoor programs in the Parish Yard. 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.*