

Guidance for Spiritual and Religious Gatherings During COVID-19 4/27/20

On April 27, 2020, Governor Kim Reynolds signed a proclamation continuing the limitation on many social gatherings and events to no more than ten people. But effective May 1, 2020, Iowans may once again gather for spiritual or religious purposes, so long as churches, synagogues, or other hosts of a spiritual or religious gathering take reasonable measures to ensure social distancing of employees, volunteers, and other participants, increased hygiene practices, and other public health measures to reduce the risk of further spread of COVID-19. This guidance is intended to assist churches, synagogues, and other houses of worship in safely navigating this public health disaster emergency:

- ❖ Provide, whenever possible, **options to conduct activities from home or through remote audio or video services**. Staying at home continues to be the best way to slow the spread of COVID-19. Holding a remote worship service or continuing to offer remote access will help protect those who should continue to avoid gatherings, especially our most vulnerable Iowans with preexisting medical conditions and those older than 65.
- ❖ Consider **smaller in-person services or conducting services outdoors**. In communicating with congregants about these measures, high-risk individuals should be advised not to attend in-person services. Creative means should be used to deliver services, such as smaller services throughout the week or weekend, outdoor services, or drive-in vehicle events.
- ❖ Follow **sanitation and hygiene measures** for all in-person religious gatherings. This means a house of worship must be sanitized regularly, separate entry and exit points may be designated (establishing a one-way traffic pattern), doors may be propped open or held open by ushers to prevent congregants from touching doors, and hand sanitizer should be available for use throughout the facility. Communion service should be individualized and conducted in a manner to minimize close interaction, and any offering collection must avoid a common plate or container that is passed from person-to-person.
- ❖ **Apply social distancing guidelines**. Facilities should move chairs or designate seating areas to ensure the ability of congregants that are not members of the same household to sit at least six feet apart. Congregants should be discouraged from shaking hands or otherwise engaging in physical contact.
- ❖ Follow other general [Public Health COVID-19 Reopening Guidance](#) as appropriate.