



CITY OF NEW HAVEN
JUSTIN M. ELICKER
MAYOR

March 28, 2020

COVID-19 Impact on Faith Community Q & A

We recognize the leadership and fantastic work that the Faith-based organizations are doing in response to COVID19. We created this Q&A to answer some questions and address present concerns.

1. Are we allowed to have to people attend services inside the church or place of worship?

Per the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) most recent guidance, it is strongly recommended to cancel or postpone community and faith-based gatherings of any size. The CDC also recommends the extended closure of the places of worship. This is intended to slow transmission rates of COVID-19 in the community. As such, and per the CDC recommendations, the City of New Haven's Health Department strongly recommends cancelling or postponing community and faith-based gatherings of any size.

2. Can we use online or video technology to conduct services?

Yes, there are no emergency orders which prohibit the virtual streaming of worship services. Also, the CDC recommends faith-based organizations to provide phone or online (live or recorded) meetings and service options. If Faith leaders choose to live stream from their place of worship, then the New Haven Health Department strongly recommended that they receive the support of no more than ten staff members to broadcast. Everybody is expected to keep 6 feet apart from each other and practice proper hygiene.

3. What if our church distributes food to the community?

If a church distributes food for the neighborhood, then it is strongly recommended to be staffed by no more than ten people. Staff must wear gloves at all times and follow other food distribution guidelines set by the New Haven Public Health Department: [[Volunteer Safety and High Risk Characteristics](#)] and [[Safety Precautions for food Distribution during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)]. This information can also be found under the New Haven COVID-19 Hub. <https://covid-19-1-newhavenct.hub.arcgis.com/>

4. Will the police be called to enforce emergency orders if we hold services?

The City of New Haven will not engage in policing places of worship. We respectfully urge that faith leaders adhere to the CDC guidance to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Again, services may be held virtually.

5. What if we want to host or sponsor recovery support group meetings or study groups?

We respectfully urge clergy and faith leaders to direct people to online services available (please see the resources section). Alternatively, if faith-based organizations want to keep running group meetings, they may follow this guide to set up online group meetings and study groups. [[Link](#)]

6. What guidance can you provide for faith communities when conducting funerals, baptisms, weddings and other important ritual services?

The New Haven Public Health Department strongly recommends faith communities to postpone these services whenever possible. If postponing is not possible, the New Haven Health Department strongly urges you to conduct such services with immediate family members only, keeping the group of people to no more than ten in total, including clergy and support staff. We strongly recommend everyone to stay 6 feet apart from each other and practice proper hygiene.

While we understand that the presence of all loved ones is essential to moments such as these, the recommendations by the New Haven Public Health Department will require the full support and discretion of families to identify those persons they believe are most vital to the events being executed correctly.

The state published some guidance for funerals of COVID-19 related deaths. The New Haven Health Department strongly recommends following the guidance. You can access the resources here. [[Link](#)]

7. We hear a lot about state financial support for the business community, but what about non-profit organizations like houses of worship?

The William Casper Graustein Memorial Fund is offering immediate support to communities in Connecticut responding to current events related to COVID-19. This support could include crisis response that addresses the physical, social, emotional wellbeing and safety of those most affected by racism and poverty. Nonprofits, including religious organizations, are eligible to apply. Apply online here. [[Link](#)]

8. Where should we direct congregational members who are experiencing financial hardships?

If congregational members are experiencing financial hardships due to loss of employment or reduced hours in the wake of COVID-19, they may be eligible for unemployment benefits. They can file a claim with the state Department of Labor by visiting [[Link](#)]

9. What are other social safety nets for vulnerable people who do not receive unemployment benefits?

Free Food. Visit the website Get Connected New Haven to get the list of the food pantries, soup kitchens and additional information to access the Elderly Nutrition Program and more [[Link](#)]

Medical insurance. You can apply for medical insurance through Access Health CT [[Link](#)] You cannot be denied services if you do not have health insurance. If you or a loved one is denied services for not having insurance, please contact the New Haven Public Health Department (203) 946-4949.

SNAP and Cash Assistance. Households and individuals can apply online here [[Link](#)]

10. What if a congregation member or I cannot pay for utilities? Is there help?

State regulators have announced that utilities will no longer be able to shut off the water, electricity or natural gas of residential customers if they don't pay their bills. Any accrued charges will be due after the moratorium is over.

11. What if a congregation member or I cannot pay my rent?

Evictions have been halted for the time being. At the same time, you should seek legal help, and know that all landlords need a court order to evict a tenant. For more information please visit the Judicial Branch COVID-19 updates website.

[\[Link\]](#)

12. What if a congregation member or I cannot pay the mortgage?

Individuals should call their banks to gather information about any type of help they are providing to people that have overdue payments or cannot afford their monthly mortgage payment.

13. How can we advise the elderly, those with special health considerations, their caregivers and other high-risk populations?

Provide special consideration in communicating risk to vulnerable populations in your community, including older adults and others with access and/or functional needs. Assign, or encourage those whom you serve to seek out, a “buddy” who will check in on and help care for them, should they get sick. Also, make plans to stay connected. Ensure community contact lists are up-to-date and that ‘calling trees’ — or other practices to account for individuals who may be living alone, elderly, and vulnerable — are in place.

14. Is there a specific state government point of contact for the faith-community?

The governor's office partnered with Dixwell's Varick Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church to form a new Community Pastoral Response Center charged with providing pastors and faith-based communities with up-to-date information about the COVID-19 pandemic.

Office Hours: Monday – Thursday 10 am to 5 pm

Telephone: 203-624-6245

Email: Pastork@varickmemorial.org

15. Is there a point of contact at City Hall?

We encourage the faith-community to call the Pastoral Command Center for updated daily information regarding COVID-19 and statewide guidelines. For city related questions, please contact either Omena McCoy or Carlos Sosa-Lombardo.

Omena McCoy

Telephone: (203) 200-8886

Email: omccoy@newhavenct.gov

Carlos Sosa-Lombardo

Telephone: 203-946-7846

Email: csosalombardo@newhavenct.gov

16. What should the faith community be doing, and clergy in their roles of community leaders, be doing to help during this global pandemic?

As we face this global pandemic, the role of the faith community, especially the faith leaders, is of great importance. As the spiritual guides of your places of worship, you have historically strived to meet the socio-economic needs of our residents. With over 200 churches located in the City New Haven, faith leaders represent a powerful force to help optimize resources by working together to ensure that we have support networks, particularly for the most vulnerable.

We ask you to please pray for our city, state and country – and to assist the City in encouraging the community not to panic, to stay home, stay safe, but to be prepared if business closures across the board are prolonged for an indefinite time. Raise awareness amongst your congregation members about proper hygiene and social distancing practices.

Also, to ensure uniform messaging, we encourage faith leaders and members of the faith community to refer to the City COVID-19 website [[Link](#)] and the New Haven Board of Education website [[Link](#)] for most up-to-date information.

17. What should we do if a congregation member or I have symptoms?

Individuals must contact their healthcare professional if they develop symptoms or have been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19 or have recently traveled from an area with widespread or ongoing community spread of COVID-19. See the CDC website for information on areas affected by COVID-19. The Health Department can also assist with directing you to care. Call the New Haven Health Department Hotline (203) 946-4949 for New Haven residents or the Yale-New Haven Health COVID-19 Hotline 1-833-275-9644.

18. When should somebody go to the Hospital?

Unless it is a medical emergency, do not call 911 or send them to the hospital. Have them call their healthcare provider by phone. DO NOT go to the hospital if you only have mild symptoms. Call the New Haven Health Department Hotline (203) 946-4949 for New Haven residents or call the Yale-New Haven Health Hotline 1-833-275-9644 to get an assessment whether you need to get tested or require hospital care.

The hospitals are only to be used for people with more severe symptoms to ensure service for the very ill, and to avoid the unnecessary spread of the coronavirus.

- Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure (based on the incubation period of MERS-CoV viruses).
- Symptoms include fever, cough, shortness of breath.
- Emergency warning signs include trouble breathing, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion or inability to arouse, bluish lips or face. This list is not all inclusive. Please consult your medical provider for any symptoms that are severe or concerning.

If you develop emergency warning signs for COVID-19 get medical attention immediately

19. What can I do if I'm sick or caring for someone that is sick?

Please follow best practices by the CDC. You can access current best practices outlined by the CDC here [[Link](#)]

20. What can I do to reduce stigma because of COVID-19?

Please help reduce stigma by following the CDC guidelines [[Link](#)]

MORE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Recommended practices for Faith Leaders

Link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1KB0VL5VPuJo21oVu8-4KfG7M4nUje4xv/view?usp=sharing>

If you think you or a congregation member have symptoms consistent with Coronavirus, please call New Haven Health Department Emergency Line

Telephone (203) 946-4949

For routine questions/issues, please call the New Haven Health Department Main Number

Telephone (203) 946-4949

Website: <https://www.newhavenct.gov/gov/depts/health/default.htm>

Information on other specific populations can be found on the New Haven Health Department website

CDC – Coronavirus Disease 2019. For updates, refer to the CDC dedicated website.

[English]: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/index.html>

[Spanish]: <https://www.cdc.gov/spanish/index.html>

Connecticut Department of Public Health

Website: <https://portal.ct.gov/DPH/Public-Health-Preparedness/Main-Page/2019-Novel-Coronavirus#Protect>

City of New Haven COVID-19 Hub

Website: <https://covid-19-1-newhavenct.hub.arcgis.com/>

How to Live Stream Your Church Service

[English] <https://drive.google.com/file/d/11SVhk3Pc0IFk97XE0TaETUNvyc4YNIH-/view>

[Español] https://drive.google.com/file/d/18R0G5t_btq-x9s633c13_LPEzyBno2aF/view

Tutorial on Live Streaming by Pastor Gustavo Carrillo

[English] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GkyDYVxroU4>

[Español] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T4Z69HqV3sc>

Technical Support to setup live streaming and online giving. The Yale Divinity School provides free over the phone technical support to live stream your church service – and to establish an online giving platform.

Telephone: (203) 824-0542

Email: kyle.pedersen@yale.edu

The Greater New Haven Community Foundation Fund. The Community foundation established a special fund to raise money that will then be donated to nonprofits in the city. No more information is currently available. Please contact them for more information.

Telephone: 203-777-2386

Website: <https://www.cfgnh.org/About/NewsEvents/ViewArticle/tabid/96/ArticleID/1995/Default.aspx>

William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund. The fund is offering immediate support to communities in Connecticut responding to current events related to COVID-19. Nonprofits, including religious organizations, are eligible to apply. Apply online: <http://www.wcgmf.org/home>
Telephone: (203) 230-3330

Alcoholics Anonymous. Offers online support through their online intergroup.
Website: <http://aa-intergroup.org/>

Cocaine Anonymous. Offers online support through their online intergroup.
Website: <http://www.ca-online.org>

Marijuana Anonymous. District 13 online fellowship of people who share our experience, strength, and hope with one another to solve a common problem and help others to recover from pot addiction. <https://ma-online.org/>

Narcotics Anonymous. Created a new page for resources related to virtual meetings: https://www.na.org/?ID=virtual_mee

SoberCity. Sobercity could be a great solution for you if you're looking for an online community that occasionally also has live events across the country.
Website: <https://www.soberocity.com/>

We Connect Recovery. Online recovery support groups will be available daily. They are open to anyone who is dealing with substance use, mental health concerns, disordered eating, as well as any other quality of life concerns. Everyone is welcome, no matter your pathway to recovery or recovery status.
Website: <https://www.weconnectrecovery.com/free-online-support-meetings>