



March 13, 2020

Dear faith community leaders of Lorain County,

The situation around the international viral outbreak of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) continues to develop. [Lorain County Public Health](#) (LCPH) is prepared and is working closely with the [Ohio Department of Health](#) and [Centers for Disease Control](#) (CDC).

On Thursday, March 13, 2020, the Director of the Ohio Department of Health [issued an Order](#) prohibiting mass gatherings of 100 people or more in the State of Ohio. Religious gatherings are explicitly excluded from the Order. The Order, however, encourages everyone to practice social distancing to protect the health of all Ohioans.

Social distancing is especially important for people most at risk of getting very sick from COVID-19, including: older adults, people with weakened immune systems (such as people who receive chemotherapy treatments), and people with health conditions including heart disease, lung disease, and diabetes. “Social distancing” means to keep about 6 feet away from other people.

LCPH does not recommend hosting events or gatherings of any size when they will likely include many older adults.

Other ways members of your faith community can protect themselves and others include:

- Wash hands often for 20 seconds with soap and water. If unavailable, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Cover your mouth and nose with your sleeve or tissue when you sneeze or cough.
- Avoid close contact (touching or shaking hands) with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your mouth, nose, and eyes with unwashed hands.
- Avoid crowds and highly attended events and gatherings.
- Stay home if you are sick or at high risk for getting very sick from COVID-19. People at high risk include: older adults, people with weakened immune systems (such as people who receive chemotherapy treatments), and people with health conditions including heart disease, lung disease, and diabetes.
- Get adequate sleep and eat well-balanced meals to ensure a healthy immune system.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Practice social distancing – keep about 6 feet away from other people.



As a faith community leader, please consider ways your community can help to slow down the spread of COVID-19:

- Encourage everyone to use the above prevention methods at all times, whether at home or on site.
- Provide supplies on site, such as soap, hand sanitizer, tissues, wipes, and trash cans if possible.
- Clean high-touch surfaces and objects often – such as counters, tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, and toilets. Use a household cleaning spray or wipe according to the label instructions.
- Monitor absences and notify Lorain County Public Health of any spikes.
- Consider how to continue to connect with your community with limited or no in-person visits.
- Consider posting handwashing signs on site, or giving verbal reminders during services.
- Consider modifying parts of your religious service to encourage social distance (avoid shaking hands, space seating further apart, wash hands before and after distributing communion, etc.).
- Consider using technology to make parts of your religious service or other ministry available online.

Lorain County Public Health is here for you as you minister to your faith community. Find up-to-date local information, signs to download and post on site, and images to share digitally, at LorainCountyHealth.com/coronavirus, or call 440-322-6367.

David Covell, MPH, RS
Health Commissioner
Lorain County Public Health