



Macedonia Baptist Church

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Rev. Leonard D. Comithier Jr., Pastor

Macedonia and COVID-19 **(Update #3 – March 26, 2020)**

The world and how we live in it is changing rapidly as everyone, every business, every community and every church responds to the COVID-19 pandemic. We are reminded each day that the goal is now to slow the transmission of the virus, and that we must adapt to create a “new normal.”ⁱ For the Macedonia church community the “new normal” has begun to evolve including the creation of this weekly (or as needed) Update. Last week we issued our first Resource List to provide the most current available resources. The deacons established virtual (teleconference) Prayer Sessions on Wednesdays at 6:30 a.m., 12:00 Noon and 6:30 p.m. Sunday worship is now only held via livestream at 11:00 a.m. If you are unable to view it live (or just want to see it again), we have initiated a system to get the link to the Sunday service sent directly to you *via text*, in addition to the website archives (bottom of homepage) and the E-News (on Friday evenings). The Macedonia COVID-19 Workgroup is working tirelessly to keep our church community in the know so everyone can make informed decisions for themselves, their families and loved ones.

We encourage everyone to continue to be mindful of the basic safety procedures established by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC)ⁱⁱ:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Sneeze or cough into a tissue if available or the crook of your elbow, not your hands. Toss any used tissue. Wash immediately after coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose.
- Avoid touching your face, especially your mouth, nose and eyes, with unwashed hands.
- Frequently disinfect surfaces touched including keyboards, desktops, cell phones, elevator buttons, doorknobs, handrails and remote controls.
- Use hand sanitizer that is, at least, 60% alcohol.
- Avoid close contact with anyone who has flu-like symptoms.
- Stay home if you have flu-like-symptoms.
- If you must go out, practice “social distancing” which means not being within 6 feet of another person.

Lastly, the CDC also recommends that all U.S. gatherings of 10+ people should be cancelled or held virtually.

In keeping with CDC recommendations, Macedonia will have livestreamed worship only at 11:00 a.m. on Sundays until further notice. The church will not be open. The closing of the church also applies to Sunday School, Bible Study, New Member Classes, and all internal and external meetings. Pastor and the Workgroup will update communications accordingly with any changes.

COVID-19 and Wearing a Facemask

As you read and hear from the news media, COVID-19 has caused major world events, such as the 2020 Olympics due to begin July 14th in Tokyo, to be postponed or cancelled. The United States has become the new epicenter of the COVID-19 virus outbreak. As the number of confirmed cases continues to increase, we still strive to mitigate the spread of the virus. One practice that many people have questions about is wearing a facemask. Does it protect you from the virus? Does it protect others from possible infection from you? How necessary is a mask?

First, let's be clear. There are several types of facemasks, but for the purpose of this update we will focus on two: the disposable, "surgical mask," and the "N95 Respirator/surgical mask" which is evaluated, tested and approved by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)ⁱⁱⁱ. The N95 Respirator is designed (tight-fitting to create a seal) for healthcare professionals who need protection from airborne and fluid hazards. The CDC does not recommend the use of respirators outside of healthcare settings.

The masks usually observed on individuals in public places are the disposable, "surgical" masks. They serve to prevent contamination of the surrounding area when a person coughs or sneezes. They also serve to keep your hands off your face, especially your nose and mouth. People inadvertently transfer viruses into these openings. Anyone with a laboratory-confirmed case or anyone experiencing active (flu-like) symptoms of COVID-19 should wear a facemask until they are isolated in a hospital or at home. There is no need to wear a facemask during isolation. Once a facemask has been worn, it should be disposed of to reduce contamination. **If you choose to wear a facemask**, be aware of the following:

Do's and Don'ts of Facemasks	
DO	DON'T
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use to protect yourself from infectious droplets often occur when someone coughs, sneezes, laughs or talks, and to keep your hands off your face, especially your nose and mouth	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• DON'T use the mask for protection against very small particles that float in the air
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make sure the mask has no defects, like a tear, torn strap or ear loop	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• DON'T wear the mask if wet or soiled.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If your mask uses tie straps, tie both top ties to the crown of your head and secure with a bow; tie bottom ties at the nape of your neck. Remove by handling only the ties, and untie the bottom tie followed by the top tie.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• DON'T crisscross ties
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If your mask uses ear loops, remove the mask from the side of your head tilted forward.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• DON'T leave a mask hanging off one ear or hanging around your neck.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Properly dispose of the mask by touching only the ear loops or the ties. Wash your hands before and after removing the mask.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• DON'T touch the front of the mask, as it is contaminated after use.
Source: Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology www.apic.org/InfectionPreventionandYou	

Maintaining Our Mental, Physical and Spiritual Health

As Pastor Comithier often reminds us, we are the embodiment of our Mind (mental), Body (physical) and Spirit (spiritual) selves. As with any other time, it is critically important that we engage in activities that nurture our whole selves – especially during *this* time. Everyone is encouraged to practice healthy habits during this time of COVID-19. The following link to a short video entitled “Tips for Staying Connected During the Coronavirus Pandemic and Healthy Habits for Emotional Wellbeing” by the Campaign to Change Direction provides a brief overview of things you can do to remain healthy while we find our new normal. <https://vimeo.com/398933056?ref=em-share>

Mental Health: Each of us handles stress and anxiety differently, but there are some common strategies for helping to reduce the intensity of our reactions and to help us stay healthy. Here are a few things you can do to support yourself^{iv v}

- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting.
- Make time to unwind. Try to do some other activities you enjoy, such as reading a book, taking a hot bath, watching your favorite TV show or movie, working in your garden, or meditating.
- Connect with others – (1) Text, chat or email others in your ministries to check on each other; (2) Use technology to stay connected with people in your life. Call or video chat with loved ones, family and friends to check in on them and to share your feelings. (3) Write a letter to tell someone how much they mean to you. (4) Connect with an old friend via phone or email.
- Review your social media and screen time habits; *follow positive people and messages*.
- Call your healthcare provider if stress gets in the way of your daily activities for several days in a row.

Physical Health: Dr. Tom Frieden^{vi} states that “of all of the various proposed measures to increase your resistance to infection, regular physical activity and adequate vitamin D levels probably have the most scientific evidence to support them -- and can be done safely.” Being active outside for, at least, 15 minutes per day helps with vitamin D levels. The doctors of MedStar Health lay out “8 Tips for Staying Active During the COVID-19 Pandemic:”

- Exercise regularly – indoors or outdoors, if possible
- Exercise by yourself, with a friend, or in small groups of less than 10
- Engage in non-contact activities that allow spacing of 6 feet between participants
- Rethink recess (with children home remember to include breaks from schoolwork)
- Work on improving your general fitness (stop smoking, get high blood pressure or diabetes under control)
- Clean and disinfect any equipment you use alone or with others
- Exercise using your body weight (no equipment needed for burpees, squats, lunges, push-ups or yoga)
- Stay in touch with your fitness community online.

In addition, stretch, take deep breaths, eat healthy, well-balanced meals, and get plenty of sleep.

Spiritual Health: The Macedonia Baptist Church family is blessed that we are already part of a God-centered community where a spirit of love runs between and among the membership. It is times like this that require us to turn to a power greater than anyone and anything known to man. In this time, we can turn to the Book of Psalms (Psalms 91:2) and read *“I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.”* This is a period when each of us can take time to meditate, to study the Bible more deeply, and to pray.

The deacons are available (contact Lead Deacon Juana Catala-Huguley at (518) 229-6930 or email at jcathug@yahoo.com). You can also join in the **Wednesday Prayer Sessions** that meet via conference call at **6:30 a.m., 12:00 Noon and 6:00 p.m.** **The dial-in number is (515) 604-9099, and the access code is 608-127-884.**

If you are part of a ministry, reach out to each other to offer spiritual support, i.e. pray together, read the Bible together, sing together, using teleconference calls and videoconferencing. Apps such as Skype, Zoom, Google Hangouts, UberConference, TrueConf Online, FreeConference, and Facebook Live provide free conferencing if you create an account. If this is all foreign to you, this is a wonderful time to expand your technology skills.

Finally, the Communications and Audiovisual Ministries have teamed up to create the ability to text a link to the previous Sunday’s worship service directly to your cell phone. The video is cloud-based and will not download to your phone. This option has been piloted and is now available to you. To have the link text to your phone, either contact your ministry leader or send an email with your cell phone number to connectmacedoniaofalbany@gmail.com. Be aware that the text link should work on SMART phones (iPhone and Droid). We cannot guarantee that other types of phones will have the capacity to open and view the video. You will have to let us know.

If you have questions regarding COVID-19, contact the CDC at www/cdc.gov/coronavirus or the New York State Department of Health Coronavirus Hotline at (888) 364-3065 or go to www.ny.gov/coronavirus

Keeping Up Church Operations and Programs

In order to continue to maintain our edifice and the programs that Macedonia provides and supports, there are two options to continue contributing your tithes and offering: Online donations or by check. To use the online option, follow these steps:

- Go to the website at: www.macedoniaofalbany.org
- Click **“Giving”** - on the following window, scroll down to select either:
 - “Donate” which allows you to give using PayPal, debit or credit card.
 - “Online Giving” which allows you to give using a debit or credit card or through your bank.
- If you choose the “Online Giving” option, you will have the opportunity to select whether you want to create an account or give as a guest.
- For either option you choose, after you submit you will see a screen indicating your donation was received and receive an email acknowledging your donation.

For those who prefer to contribute by check, you may send your tithes and offerings through the mail. Be sure to address your envelope to:

Macedonia Baptist Church
26 Wilson Ave.
Albany, NY 12205

If you have an offering envelope at home, you will notice that it is pre-addressed. You can simply enclose your check; seal the envelope; add a stamp; and place it in the mail. **DO NOT MAIL CASH!**

We will continue to be alert to our everchanging landscape, but we will also continue to hold God's unchanging hand for we are a people of faith. And remember "...perfect love casteth out fear..." (1 John 4:18)

DISCLAIMER

The information contained in the E-news and otherwise disseminated by Macedonia Baptist Church and its authorized agents concerning COVID-19 (Coronavirus) are for informational purposes only. The content is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified healthcare provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition or precautions appropriate for your specific circumstances. Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information provided as of the date of the content issued, however, due to the unprecedented nature of the current public health emergency and rapidly changing guidance, please consult with your physician or qualified healthcare provider and/or the reputable resources listed for the latest changes.

ⁱ "Former CDC director: There's a long war ahead and our Covid-19 response must adapt" by Dr. Tom Frieden

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/03/20/health/coronavirus-response-must-adapt-frieden-analysis/index.html>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/prevention.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/index.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/respirator-use-faq.html>

^{iv} https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fabout%2F coping.html

^v <https://www.changedirection.org/>

^{vi} "Former CDC director: There's a long war ahead and our Covid-19 response must adapt" by Dr. Tom Frieden

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/03/20/health/coronavirus-response-must-adapt-frieden-analysis/index.html>

Doing Greater Works to the Glory of God

Inspired by John 14:12