



Macedonia Baptist Church

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Rev. Leonard D. Comithier Jr., Pastor

Macedonia and COVID-19

(Update #7 – April 23, 2020)

Introduction: What is the COVID-19 Workgroup Talking About?

Just like you, members of the COVID-19 Workgroup (that meets each Monday evening via conference call) are feeling the weight of the outbreak and the restrictions we all follow to maintain the highest level of safety. And, just like you, the Workgroup realizes how deeply the restrictions have not only limited our daily activities, but more importantly, how they have limited our ability to relate to each other, our families, friends and loved ones in ways that are comforting for them and for us.

This, the 7th edition of the Update falls within our fifth week of being apart (we initially issued two editions in one week). It has been five Sundays since we worshipped together and had the opportunity to see each other, speak to each other, and to feel the spirit of community and love that filled Macedonia each week. The Workgroup, like you, sorely misses that experience and all that it provided for each of us each week.

With that in mind, the Workgroup is beginning to think about what things will be like when some of the restrictions are lifted, and we can slowly begin to return to the physical church. It is clear that social distancing and face coverings will be part of our lives for some time, but what other adjustments will need to be made by all of us to allow us to return in ways that first and foremost keep us healthy? We may ultimately want to practice certain safety precautions independent of what may be allowed by the local, state, or federal government.

Macedonia has been a busy place with many ministries, activities, projects, and events. We have been blessed to be able to serve as a resource for the Capital Region, and the publication of these Updates and the creation of a “COVID-19 Information and Resources” section on the church website has allowed us to continue to serve the community even during the pandemic. As we collectively begin to think about what changes may need to occur to allow us to worship and operate from the physical church again, there are probably more questions than answers right now. With Pastor’s leadership, the Workgroup will develop strategies to involve all of us in articulating and answering those questions. Since we have the time, we want to ensure that we use it to develop a well thought out plan for re-opening that addresses all we do and reflects who we are with everyone’s health and safety in mind.

It remains important to continue following these basic safety procedures established by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC)¹

- 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.
- Hold any gatherings of 10 or more people virtually or not at all.

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

COVID-19: What Have We Learned and Where Are We Now?

Most people reading this edition of the *Update* are much more knowledgeable now than when we started down this road in March. We have learned there is no vaccine (as of yet) that will protect anyone from or cure anyone of the COVID-19 virus. We have learned what symptoms indicate the possibility that someone has contracted the COVID-19 virus (dry cough, fever, difficulty breathing, headache, altered taste or smell, diarrhea, runny nose, sore throat, aches, and pains). We now know that people who have been infected may not show any symptoms at all but are yet contagious and can transmit the virus to those around them. We have learned that the most critical preventative steps we can all take are: (1) Washing your hands frequently for at least 20 seconds; (2) Keeping social distance when in public of, at least, 6 feet between you and anyone else, and (3) Covering your mouth and nose when in public places. Those are the basics; other measures are referenced in the first part of this *Update*.

We find ourselves in a new place now in relation to the COVID-19 virus. A significant focus of the medical community, i.e. epidemiologists, researchers, physicians, healthcare providers, is now on determining how to first ensure that as the country begins to re-open we do not re-ignite the spread of the virus, and second how best to manage the virus prior to the development of a vaccine. It has not been determined whether COVID-19 will behave much like the flu and be a seasonal illness. However, because the flu has been around for a longer period, much is known about its characteristics and vaccines exist to minimize its effects each year. Because COVID-19 is new (novel), the journey begins to have similar familiarity with it.

Immunity is the most pressing issue as researchers delve into controlling the COVID-19 virus. The big question being: “Once a person has had the virus, is she or he immune temporarily or permanently?” “When you get infected with viruses,...your immune system fights back by producing proteins called antibodies. These stick around for the long haul, and your body is prepared to churn out

more of them if you come into contact with the pathogen again.”ⁱⁱ Dr. Michael Ryan, Executive Director of the WHO’s Health Emergencies Programme responds this way:

...it's still "unknown" whether those previously infected with COVID-19 can be re-infected, and what type of immunity they have against the virus. One would expect that a person who generates a full-blown immune response with detectable antibodies should have protection for a period of time. We just don't know what that period of time is. We would expect that to be a reasonable period of protection, but it is very difficult to say that with a new virus.ⁱⁱⁱ

Immunities exist on a spectrum. In the case of the virus that causes measles, one is left with a lifelong immunity and it is much the same for the virus that causes chicken pox. The influenza virus mutates so rapidly that new strains emerge each year causing us to need a flu vaccination each year. The bacteria that cause tetanus, however, result in no long-term immunity but with a vaccination and booster shots immunity is temporary. Those infected with HIV produce large amounts of antibodies, but they do nothing to prevent or cure the disease.^{ivv}

The goals are now to: 1) expand acute test; 2) develop effective treatment; and 3) to have sufficient antibody testing to determine if enough people have had the virus and developed antibodies against it – some level of immunity. Often referred to as “herd immunity.” With herd immunity, if there is a seasonal bout of COVID-19 illnesses, the reduced number of people contracting the virus will not overwhelm our healthcare system. Until there is a vaccine, herd immunity will play a major role in the public health decisions and guidelines regarding when and how we begin to resume our daily activities.

Special Focus: Helpful Tools

Pastor Comithier believes the COVID-19 virus pandemic has raised everyone’s level of consciousness both about life and about our own mortality. He encourages us to take some time to create tools to help us and our families should we find ourselves in situations where communication may be difficult or non-existent, and we need to make decisions regarding our own or a loved one’s medical treatment.

Two documents are briefly introduced here, but a more extensive discussion of helpful legal tools will follow at a later time. The two documents to be familiar with are the **Power of Attorney** and the **Health Care Proxy**.

- *Power of Attorney* – There are multiple types of Power of Attorney (POA) forms. In general, they are documents used to allow someone to designate another person to address specific financial or business transactions on their behalf. The POA can be created, if desired, for a limited or defined period of time or it can remain in effect permanently (called a “Durable Power of Attorney.”). One Power of Attorney form is available from the New York State Bar Association through the following link:

<https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/hra/downloads/pdf/services/homelessness-prevention/poa.pdf>

The POA form cannot be used for health care decisions. The completed form must be notarized. If you have questions, consult a lawyer.

- *Health Care Proxy* – A Health Care Proxy is a document that names one person the health care agent of another person. The agent can make health care decisions for you should you be unable to make decisions for yourself, such as on a respirator or heavily sedated. Your health care agent would also have the responsibility to make sure doctors and other medical personnel provide necessary and appropriate care according to your wishes. This includes end-of-life care.^{vi} As we go through this time of COVID-19, it is important that everyone have a Health Care Proxy in the event you are unable to speak. The Health Care Proxy would reflect what you would like done in the case of severe illness.

You might want to take some time to think about who you would trust to speak on your behalf regarding your medical care. There is no one right person to serve in this capacity. Some examples of who might serve in this capacity include a spouse, adult son/daughter, close relative, or friend. However, the decision is ultimately up to you.

An attorney is not needed to complete a form. The form is available from the New York State Department of Health through the following link:

<https://www.health.ny.gov/publications/1430.pdf>

Through the link, the Department of Health also provides more details regarding the Health Care Proxy and answers common questions.

Please refer to the references cited at the end of this *Update* and to the accompanying Resource document or the Macedonia website for additional information.

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. ***The church prefers the use of “Online Giving” as it is a direct transfer from you to the church.*** To use the online options, follow these steps:

- Go to the website at: www.macedoniaofalbany.org
- Click “**Giving**” - on the following window, scroll down to select either:
 - “**Online Giving**” which allows you to give using a debit or credit card or through your bank.
 - “**Donate**” which allows you to give using PayPal, debit, or credit card. ***Be aware that PayPal requires a third party to transfer funds to the church.***
- 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, ***and to designate how you want your contribution allocated, i.e. tithes, benevolence, scholarship, etc.***
- 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. ***Each day one of the Trustees stops at church to secure any checks received 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 *"Here's How COVID-19 Compares to Other Diseases,"* by Matt Simon, Wired.com, April 17, 2020. <https://www.wired.com/story/covid-19-immunity/>

ⁱⁱⁱ *"What To Know About Active vs Passive Immunity – And Why Both Matter With COVID-19,"* by Leah Groth, Health.com. <https://www.health.com/condition/infectious-diseases/active-vs-passive-immunity>

^{iv} *"What Immunity to COVID-19 Really Means,"* by Stacey McKenna, Scientific American, April 10, 2020. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/what-immunity-to-covid-19-really-means/>

^v *"Scientists Unsure How Long Virus Immunity Lasts,"* by Robert Lee Hotz, Wall Street Journal, April 20, 2020.

^{vi} *Medical Power of Attorney*" - <https://www.bankrate.com/glossary/m/medical-power-of-attorney/>