



Macedonia Baptist Church

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Macedonia and COVID-19

(Update #9 – May 7, 2020)

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

The COVID-19 Workgroup picked up where it left off last week...talking about how the Workgroup has functioned thus far into the pandemic – What worked? What could we have done better? What did we miss? Have our communication methods and content been helpful (the *Updates*, the E-News related to COVID-19, the new website section about COVID-19, the Resource documents)? We want to document the steps the Workgroup has taken to share the most accurate and current information and developments regarding COVID-19. In part we want to have a record to remember everything that has happened and how we dealt with it, but also the documenting will serve as a roadmap for other emergency situations in the future. More specially, if a second (or third) wave of the virus is coming, we want to be prepared and not caught off guard.

In addition, Pastor has begun the process of guiding the Workgroup and the ministries through the process of re-imaging or re-imagining what Macedonia will look like in its “new normal.” How will our ministries function given the various health and safety considerations they will need to abide by? Given what we now know about the COVID-19 virus, how can that information be used by the ministries in developing their plans for fulfilling the goals of their ministries? Until this point, the work has primarily focused on things outside of church, i.e. cleaning your home and kitchen, medical developments, resources in the Capital Region for education, volunteering, food, and more. It seems we have arrived at a transition point and our gaze now turns inward to Macedonia.

As we begin the journey back to church, our communication method will become less formal. This will be the last *Update* publication you will receive. Any new developments related to COVID-19 will be incorporated into the Friday E-News. Notices regarding new resources will also be included in the E-News. The Workgroup will continue to identify topics that might be of interest and useful, but ministries will also be invited to identify relevant topics related to re-imaging Macedonia. The process for submitting topics, or even developing a short narrative about a particular topic, will be shared at the upcoming Saturday session Pastor has scheduled with the ministry leaders.

Remember, it remains important to continue following these basic safety procedures established by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC)ⁱ

- 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 livestreams its worship service 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: Treatment

Just in case you might’ve heard somewhere from somebody that there is a cure for COVID-19, let’s put the truth out – there is no cure for COVID-19 at this time. There are a number of laboratories working hard to develop a vaccine, but even with researchers and scientists working as fast as they can that process will take some time. It won’t be any time soon.

In the meantime, the best thing anyone can do is first and foremost follow the safety precautions from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) listed earlier in this document. Washing your hands for, at least 20 seconds, frequently, keeping unwashed hands away from your eyes, nose and mouth, and keeping social distance of 6 or more feet between you and anyone else when in public places (except with those in your family group who live together) play a critical role in reducing the likelihood of contracting with the virus.

The question arises as to how do you know whether you have even been infected with the virus? If you have been infected, symptoms typically appear within 2 – 14 days after exposure. Six new symptoms have been added to the original three:

	<i>At least two of these symptoms:</i>	
Coughing	Chills	Muscle ache
Fever	Repeated shaking with chills	Sore throat
Shortness of breath/difficulty breathing	Headache	New loss of taste or smell

Depending on the severity of your symptoms, a “Self-Checker” assessment is available on the CDC website at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html> or an “Online Assessment” on the New York State Department of Health website at <https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/covid-19-testing#mobile-testing>. Both assessments will walk you through several questions to help you make decisions and guide you to the appropriate medical care.

Please be aware however that **online assessments are not a replacement for a healthcare professional.**

If you have mild symptoms, often described as “flu-like,” you may want to follow the same treatment you would follow for a case of the fluⁱⁱ:

- Stay home except to get medical care.
- Monitor your symptoms carefully.
- Get rest and stay hydrated. Take over-the-counter medicines, such as acetaminophen, to help you feel better.
- If you have a medical appointment, notify your healthcare provider ahead of time that you have or may have COVID-19.
- Stay in a specific room and away from other people in your home. If possible, use a separate bathroom. If you must be around others, wear a facemask.
- Call your medical professional immediately if you have any of these **emergency warning signs** for COVID-19:
 - Trouble breathing
 - Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
 - New confusion or inability to arouse
 - Bluish lips or face

This list is not all possible symptoms. Please call your medical provider for any other symptoms that are severe or concerning to you. Call 911 if you have a medical emergency. Notify the operator that you have, or think you might have, COVID-19. If possible, put on a cloth face covering before medical help arrives.ⁱⁱⁱ

The only way to know whether you have contracted COVID-19 is to be tested! Testing is **available free of charge** in many locations in the Capital Region, including mobile testing units sponsored by the Whitney Young Health Center. Testing **DOES NOT** give you the virus. Knowing whether you are infected will allow you to take steps to protect those you love and care about from contracting the virus from you. Remember, *having no symptoms does not mean you are not infected and in the process of spreading the virus to others*. Many people in our community advocated for the mobile testing units and it would be a shame if they were directed to go elsewhere because we did not take advantage of their presence. Testing information for the Capital Region follows:

- a. Whitney M. Young, Jr. Health Center – Schedules testing both at the center on Lark Dr. in Albany and for its mobile units each week. All testing is by appointment only. After being screened for symptoms over the phone, a determination is made regarding the need to test. To be screened, call (518) 465-4771.

Whitney M. Young, Jr. Health Center - 920 Lark Drive, Albany

Monday: 8:30am – 12 noon

Tuesday: 1:00 – 4pm

Wednesday: 8:30am – 12 noon

Thursday: 1:00 – 4:00pm

Friday: 8:30am – 12 noon

Check this website each week for dates and locations of the mobile units:

<https://www.albanycounty.com/departments/health/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-results>

- b. “In partnership with Albany Med and St. Peter’s Health Partners, New York State has opened a COVID-19 mobile testing site at The University at Albany, 1400 Washington Ave., Colonial Quad parking lot. The testing center is...open each day from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Testing is prioritized for individuals in high-risk populations. Appointments are required and may be made by calling 888-364-3065. No walk-ins are permitted, and all patients must be in a vehicle.”^{iv}
- c. The following link will take you to a document that lists the “Testing Sites for COVID-19” in Albany, Latham, Clifton Park, Watervliet, Saratoga Springs and Amsterdam (4/24/20). The document also provides criteria for eligibility for testing, scheduling, and any additional information. <https://www.saratogacountyny.gov/wp/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/COVID-19-Testing-Sites.pdf>
- d. The “*Resources Available to You – May 7, 2020*” lists testing sites for Albany, Schenectady, Rensselaer, and Saratoga counties.

There are some positive indicators in the search for a cure for the COVID-19 virus. The National Institutes of Allergy and Infectious Diseases reported positive findings on its clinical trial of the drug Remdesivir. The results showed that use of the drug shortened recovery time for patients with the COVID-19 virus.^v The Federal Food and Drug Administration is looking to expand the research related to the use of “convalescent plasma” to treat patients with COVID-19 virus. The FDA stated that “...convalescent plasma has the potential to lessen the severity or shorten the length of illness caused by COVID-19. It is important that we evaluate this potential therapy in the context of clinical trials, through expanded access, as well as facilitate emergency access for individual patients, as appropriate.”^{vi} Anyone who has recovered from the virus can donate blood. Blood donation sites are listed in this week’s “*Resources Available To You – May 7, 2020.*”

Special Focus: Going Forward

The excitement of getting back together is creating a whirlwind of energy, and it is going to take all of us to get Macedonia’s “new normal” right as everyone’s health and safety depends on it. We want to worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24 KJV), and our planning will allow us to do that. One truth of our plans for how we will worship and serve differently is that people of color are a more vulnerable group in relation to COVID-19. We have experienced the greatest numbers of identified cases and the highest number of deaths relative to our demographic in each region of the country. We want to keep this fact in mind as we plan to worship, serve and be safe.

As we move forward, here are some of the resources to assist us in being safe and to keep us all connected:

- The previous eight issues of the *Update* and the *Resources Available to You* are available to you on the church website at www.macedoniaofalbany.org Click **COVID-19** on the home page.

- Pastor is working with the Ministry Leaders to help determine what changes each ministry will need to make to fulfill that ministry's goals.
- **Beginning this Sunday, May 10th**, a dial-in number will be provided to allow anyone **who does not have access the livestream** to listen to the livestreamed service by telephone. There are a limited number of lines so please use the dial-in **only if you do not have access to the livestream**. Look for the dial-in information in tomorrow evenings' E-News.
- The co-chairs of our Safety and Security Ministry have developed guidelines for us to use in making plans to re-open the church. Ministry leaders will be provided a copy.
- The church has established a ZOOM account for use by the ministries. A process is being developed for ministries to schedule ZOOM sessions to avoid conflicting ministry meeting dates and times. As soon as the process is finalized it will be shared.

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 about topics discussed in this edition of the *Update*.

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**

*It has been brought to our attention that the post office equipment does not handle the size of our offering envelopes well. Therefore, if you have an offering envelope at home, feel free to enclose your check, and seal the envelope. Then place the offering envelope inside a standard letter or business envelope prior to mailing. Remember - **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 *"Treatments for COVID-19,"* Harvard Health Publishing, April 2020.
<https://www.albanycounty.com/departments/health/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-results>

ⁱⁱⁱ *"What To Do If You Are Sick,"* Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>

^{iv} *"COVID-19 Update,"* Albany Medical Center, April 27, 2020
https://www.amc.edu/patient/services/infectious_disease/coronavirus.cfm#Testing%20Information

^v *"Remdesivir Shows Modest Benefit in Coronavirus Trial"* by Gina Kolata, Peter Baker and Noah Weiland, New York Times, April 29, 2020
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/29/health/gilead-remdesivir-coronavirus.html>

^{vi} *"Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update: FDA Encourages Recovered Patients to Donate Plasma for Development of Blood-Related Therapies,"* by Steven M. Hahn, Commissioner of Food and Drugs, April 16, 2020
<https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/coronavirus-covid-19-update-fda-encourages-recovered-patients-donate-plasma-development-blood>