

Guidance for Resumption of In-Person Gatherings - East Goshen Mennonite Church

Prepared by COVID-19 Team for East Goshen Mennonite Church November 2, 2020)

Introduction

One of the most challenging tasks that the COVID team has been asked to work on is to decide when it is appropriate to resume in-person gatherings. The COVID team has worked diligently in trying to meet the safety, relational and spiritual needs of our congregation. These needs vary greatly from person to person and are based on a variety of important factors. Additionally, while various statistical measures are available from a variety of sources, there is very little guidance for congregations such as East Goshen that hopes to use these metrics in determining when and how resumption of gatherings can safely occur. We are offering this guidance as our best understanding for the needs of East Goshen at this time

Plan for Resuming In-Person Gatherings

The COVID team will be using three measurements to determine feasibility for resuming in-person gatherings. These are:

- 1) Daily Average of New COVID Cases per week in Elkhart County
 - i. This average is based on a 7-day stretch from Wednesday to Tuesday.
 - ii. The results are gathered from Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center (<https://bao.arcgis.com/covid-19/jhu/county/18039.hymns CCM I>)
- 2) Total Weekly Deaths due to Coronavirus for Elkhart County
 - i. This is the total number of deaths based on a 7-day stretch from Wednesday to Tuesday.
 - ii. The results are gathered from State of Indiana COVID-19 Dashboard (<https://www.coronavirus.in.gov/>)
- 3) Percent Positivity Rate for Elkhart County
 - i. This is a daily figure.
 - ii. The results are gathered from State of Indiana COVID-19 Dashboard (<https://www.coronavirus.in.gov/>)

(Note – We are using a 7-day stretch from Wednesday to Tuesday for the convenience of Worship Ministry, Worship Planners, and the COVID team for worship planning purposes and in evaluating the feasibility to meet on any given Sunday.)

The measurements from these metrics that need to be met for in-person gatherings are: three weeks of a Daily Average of 35 or less **and** Total Deaths of 3 or less. The percent positivity metric will be used by the COVID team as a reference to supplement the other two measurements. For reference, we were close to meeting these standards in August, but recent increases have negatively affected our hopes for resuming in-person worship.

Logistics and Procedures for In-Person Gatherings

Once the Elkhart County numbers meet our goals gatherings can resume in the following ways:

Worship services will be limited to 50 persons with the following restrictions and guidelines.

- 1) Masks will be required to be worn covering the nose and mouth at all times while in the church building. Exceptions are made for children who have not reached their 2nd birthday.
- 2) Family groupings or persons living in the same household sit together and will be spaced 6 feet apart from others in all directions.
- 3) Persons will initially be invited to worship services based on the first letter of their last names. Those with last names beginning in A-I for week one, J-R for week two, and S-Z for week three.
- 4) All services will continue to be on Zoom.
- 5) Those who plan to come to their respective worship service will need to make their intentions known by the Friday prior to the Sunday worship service so that proper seating arrangements can be made. *(Procedures for this requirement have not been finalized, but will be communicated prior to resuming in-person worship.)*
- 6) Please limit visiting with others to when you are outdoors. When you arrive into the building please go directly to your assigned seats. After the service is over please go directly outdoors.
- 7) Persons at greater risk ([See High Risk Individuals](#)) should consider not attending in-person gatherings.
- 8) Persons who are having symptoms of COVID-19 ([See Symptoms](#)), who are awaiting test results for COVID-19, or who have been exposed to persons with symptoms, should not attend gatherings.
- 9) If anyone exhibits symptoms of COVID or tests positive within 14 days of gathering, please contact the coordinator of the event or one of the individuals on the EGMC COVID-19 Team so that one of the COVID team may follow up with appropriate persons.

Outdoor gatherings can begin with groups no larger than 75 persons.

- 1) Masks will be required to be worn covering the nose and mouth at all times for any gathering related to East Goshen Mennonite Church, even an outdoor gathering. Exceptions are made for children who have not reached their 2nd birthday.
- 2) Maintain a minimum of six feet in all directions, except for family groups or persons living in the same household.
- 3) Persons at greater risk ([See High Risk Individuals](#)) should consider not attending in-person gatherings.
- 4) Persons who are having symptoms of COVID-19 ([See Symptoms](#)), who are awaiting test results for COVID-19, or who have been exposed to persons with symptoms, should not attend gatherings.
- 5) If anyone exhibits symptoms of COVID or tests positive within 14 days of gathering, please contact the coordinator of the event or one of the individuals on the EGMC COVID-19 Team so that one of the COVID team may follow up with appropriate persons.

Limitations

The following activities are not recommended by the COVID team for East Goshen Mennonite Church sponsored gatherings at this time:

- 1) Fellowship meals
- 2) In-person communion services
- 3) In-person anointing services
- 4) In-person foot washing services
- 5) Overnight retreats
- 6) Sunday school classes for adults and children in conjunction with in-person worship services
- 7) Any other activity that places persons in close or physical contact with others.

Strategies for the future

As one can tell, the COVID team is and will continue to take a very cautious approach for in-person gatherings. After we are able to meet for three weeks of Sunday morning worship, a Zoom only worship service will again be scheduled to allow the COVID team appropriate time to evaluate the effectiveness of the current gathering strategies and make any changes, either more or less restrictive, that are necessary. We ask for your grace as we continue to navigate these difficult times.

High-Risk Individuals

- Temperature higher than 99.6
- Any respiratory symptoms such as cough or shortness of breath
- Anyone over age 65
- Any overweight individual with a BMI of 35 or above
- Anyone with any type of diabetes
- Anyone with any lung disease including asthma, emphysema, chronic bronchitis, or COPD
- Anyone with heart disease including congestive heart failure or a history of coronary by-pass or stents.
- Anyone with cancer
- Anyone with autoimmune disease or on medication that can affect the immune system.
- Anyone with an organ transplant or on immunosuppressant medications

Symptoms of COVID-19

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea