



# **FAITH-BASED RECOMMENDATIONS**

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## INTRODUCTION

The Governor's Office of Community Initiatives convened a workgroup of faith-based leaders across the state representing a broad array of faiths and denominations to discuss the Governor's vision for reopening the economy based on the criteria outlined in his plan, "Maryland Strong: Roadmap to Recovery."

[https://governor.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/MD\\_Strong.pdf](https://governor.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/MD_Strong.pdf)

The Faith-Based Workgroup provided a report with recommendations reflecting its deliberations and review over the course of three rounds of meetings on May 4, 6, and 8, 2020. The recommendations represent a synthesis of the workgroup's consensus on complicated and divergent topics related to public worship. The following is a summary of that report.

## STAGE 1: LOW-RISK ACTIVITIES

- The majority of the workgroup's faith leaders felt that the best approach would be to limit the number of congregants to the primary worship space based on achieving the recommended distancing ratio in that space (7 feet between individual worshippers or same-household family groups), and reducing the allowable attendance to that number. The overall total would be capped to 250 worshippers. Faith-based institutions with much larger congregations and the space to accommodate them safely could submit a plan for county approval to accommodate a larger percentage of their congregations.
- The following public health safety measures are recommended for Stage I:
  - wearing face masks;
  - non-contact temperature taking at the doors (preferred) or voluntary temperature taking at home prior to arrival;
  - seven-foot spacing between individual worshippers and same-household family groups in worship spaces;
  - refraining from congregational singing; and
  - sanitizing contact surfaces before and after worship.
- The size, location, and make up of Maryland's religious congregations vary widely and these recommendations must take into account that a one-size-fits-all approach is not possible for the implementation of Stage I. Faith leaders may choose to implement additional and stricter rules for public worship than those permitted as they take into consideration vulnerable members in their respective congregations and other issues specific to their communities.
- Shortening the normal duration of services to accommodate more services into the day's venue if needed and to take into consideration small children who may not be able to observe distancing protocols for an extended period of time.
- Lastly, the workgroup was unanimous in support of recommending that Stage I implementation should include faith-based ministerial activities such as pastoral and home visits that are vital to the faithful in crisis, fully observing public health guidelines.

The Governor's Office of Community Initiatives is part of the Governor's Coordinating Offices and connects Marylanders to economic, volunteer, and human service opportunities through government, business, and nonprofit partners. Its outreach efforts encompass the state's geographic areas, ethnic groups, and faith communities.

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