



1001 E. Fayette Street • Baltimore, Maryland 21202
Bernard C. "Jack" Young, Mayor
Letitia Dzirasa, M.D., Commissioner of Health

March 13, 2020

Dear faith leaders and lay persons:

In light of the continued global spread of COVID-19, the Health Department has heard from a number of congregations and religious organizations throughout Baltimore regarding questions and concerns about this virus. I would like to take this opportunity to provide some information on COVID-19, as well as guidance for you and your organization.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has provided guidance tailored to faith-based organizations. This guidance, [available on the CDC's website for your review](#), is meant to help you and your organization adopt prevention strategies and mitigate the impact of COVID-19 if members of your congregation are affected.

While Baltimore City has not had a resident test positive for COVID-19, there are still steps you can take right now to help your organization prepare:

- Update your existing emergency operations plan
- Ensuring key prevention strategies are included in that plan:
 - Practicing everyday preventive actions, including staying home if you are sick, regularly washing your hands, and using a tissue if you need to cough or sneeze. For more tips, [go here](#).
 - Provide COVID-19 prevention supplies, including soap, hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol, and tissues.
 - Plan for staff absences, in case staff become sick or need to care for members of their household.
- Communicate information about COVID-19 and everyday preventive actions
- Congregants who are sick should be encouraged to stay home
- Older adults (60 and older) are at a higher risk of developing severe illness. We recommend older adults avoid gatherings in large crowds.
- For specific advice on mass gatherings, please see the [Health Department's event guidance](#), issued March 12, 2020.

Remember – you are not in this alone! The entire Health Department staff, as well as our counterparts across local, state, and federal government agencies are working tirelessly to address this virus and protect residents from harm. For more information about the work that we are doing, visit our [COVID-19 webpage](#) for updates.

Sincerely,
Dr. Letitia Dzirasa, M.D.
Baltimore City Health Commissioner