



THE UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
GOVERNMENT HOUSE  
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## **Coronavirus (COVID-19) Guidance for Re-opening Houses of Worship for Services**

### **Issued and effective on: June 1, 2020**

*The Government of the US Virgin Islands (the Government) takes seriously its mission to protect the lives and health of residents and visitors in the COVID-19 Pandemic Emergency. We recognize that congregational worship is a very important part of the lives of many, but the life and safety of your congregants is at stake. The only way we can contain and mitigate the impact of COVID19 is by aggressive social distancing. Please note that the virus can be spread by individuals who show no symptoms and do not know that they are infected. To that end, the Government has developed guidance that may appear drastic in certain instances, but has been developed and deployed to avoid transmission of a virus that has no cure and to achieve the goal of protecting everyone's health and life. THIS IS A SERIOUS PUBLIC HEALTH MATTER.*

- Groups of 50 *people or less* that adhere to social distancing guidelines from the CDC and VIDOH, can meet as of June 1.
- Each congregant must be 6 feet apart from one another.
- Each congregant must wear a facial covering (for ages 2 and up)
- Ensure that the House of Worship building interior is appropriately cleaned paying attention to areas where congregants sit or touch often.
- Ventilate the building to minimize mold exposures, etc.
- Open and run all the faucets and flush and clean toilets. Run the water from all faucets and other hot and cold water-outlets for five minutes to ensure the water system has been thoroughly flushed out. If you have any concerns seek appropriate professional guidance from a public health official.
- Ensure that all areas of the sanctuary that are touched often (doorknobs, light switches, etc.) have been thoroughly disinfected and will continue to be cleaned and disinfected between use and after each service.
- **No communion is allowed during Mass.** Parishioners are not to partake in receiving communion wafers or wine at this time.

## COVID-19 Guidance for Re-opening Houses of Worship for Services

Page | 2

- Individuals speaking from the pulpit can remove their mask only if they are at least 10 feet away from the closest congregant.
- Ensure that congregants (with the exception of family members of the same household) **do not** share Bibles, Holy Books, prayer books, hymnals, etc. Each person should bring their own books for service and take them home with them after the service. All prayer/hymnal books should be removed from the pews and cleaned and stored to prevent common use among congregants.
- Make sure hand sanitizer is available to each congregant at the entrance door of the sanctuary and that everyone sanitizes their hands upon arrival.
- If toilets or washing facilities are made available, make sure that there are disposable paper towels, and adequate liquid soap and sanitizer in the facility.
- Lock the sanctuary after use.
- The advice above also applies if others need to enter the sanctuary, for example, workers to undertake necessary maintenance.

### Other avenues of communication/broadcasting of service:

- Video-conferenced services
- Regular text messages
- Phone meetings utilizing the daily word or daily Text
- Audio and/or videotaped sermons
- Video display of service to minimize use of books/hymnals
- Prayer group meetings by phone or videoconferencing

### Coronavirus (COVID-19): Guidance for Funeral Services or Memorials

*We are keenly aware of the difficult time for families and friends with the loss of a loved one. These recommendations are provided in an effort to protect and preserve the life and safety for each person and our entire community.*

- **Large public viewings are to be discontinued.** If viewings can be done admitting 10 people at a time, that can be an alternative but the number of people at a viewing must be limited to no more than ten (10) persons in the funeral home at a time.
- Attendance at a funeral or memorial is limited to immediate family only and no more than 50 family members at any one time. If the individual for whom the funeral is being held has no immediate family, attendance shall be limited to no more than 10 close friends. **Immediate family is defined as spouse or partner, children, parents, and grandchildren.** Any waiver of the number of immediate family members who can attend should be addressed in writing to the Department of Health and shall be within the discretion of the Commissioner of Health or her designee.
- In relation to burials, it is advised that a service held at the graveside shall be limited to no more than 50 persons.

**COVID-19 Guidance for Re-opening Houses of Worship for Services**

Page | 3

- **Social distancing** of 6 feet between individuals must be maintained (except where they are from the same household, or a care giver or the person is assisted by a care giver) and relevant hygiene (hand sanitizing) guidance followed at all elements/events at a funeral or memorial. Hugging, kissing and hand holding should not take place to minimize the risk of infection. Attendees should avoid touching their eyes, nose and mouth and cough or sneeze into a tissue or elbow.
- Funeral or memorial service attendees **must observe social distancing guidelines from crematorium and burial ground staff.**
- If a person is symptomatic (showing symptoms of COVID-19 infection) they are not allowed to attend a funeral service in person.
- To help stop the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) people must seriously consider not attending a funeral in person if:
  - They are part of a **high risk** group
  - If a member of their household is symptomatic

**APPROVED BY:**



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