

West Hills Church
Coronavirus Response Plan
Updated 3/17/2020

What We Know

The spread of the Coronavirus in the United States has made it critical that churches plan to do their part in slowing the spread of the virus and protecting vulnerable populations¹. At the same time, we have a call to minister to each other and to the world around us. In a relational community like West Hills Church (WHC), we naturally want to be spiritually and emotionally available to one another. The plan below seeks to strike a balance between the above objectives.

While the West Hills Church Session will remain open to creative suggestions and practices from the larger Church and the policies of the Westside School District, our choices in these matters will rely most heavily on guidance from the Douglas County Health Department (DCHD) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

What You Can Do

- Stay home if you are sick
- Avoid physical contact (i.e. handshaking, hugs, fist bumps...)
- Wash hands frequently and especially after sneezing, coughing, and encountering someone who may be ill, or before preparing, serving or eating food.
- WHC members and 'friends of the family' (FoF) who are at higher risk (including older adults and those with chronic medical conditions – see links below for more information) are encouraged to consider protecting themselves by engaging in social distancing.
- Check the website (whcomaha.org) and follow WHC on Facebook (@WestHillsChurchOmaha) for updates
- Update your contact information and preferred contact method

What We Will Do

- **Live Worship (when large group meetings are not restricted)**
 - Physical contact restrictions apply, see above
 - The WHC Worship and Music Team (in conjunction with the staff) will create strategies that reduce physical contact issues during worship. Issues to be addressed include but are not limited to:
 - Passing of the friendship pad
 - Use of pew materials (pens, envelopes, prayer cards, worship bags, Bibles, hymnals...)
 - Microphone use for Joys and Concerns
 - Communion
 - Offering collection
 - Contact during closing Benediction
 - The WHC Session will determine if in-person worship will be limited to one Sunday worship service. Some issues might be better addressed by this reduction, e.g. it will be nearly impossible to sanitize pew space in the time between our current services
- **Events**
 - All events and meetings will move to an online continue as scheduled until WHC receives further direction from the DCHD, the CDC, or another governmental agency.

¹ Mitigation efforts like social distancing help reduce the disease caseload on any given date, and can keep the healthcare system from becoming overwhelmed – *The Wall Street Journal*

- When practical, meetings may be conducted virtually by conference call and/or video conference
- WHC will close the church facility if at any point WHC staff and volunteers are not able to maintain the levels of safety (cleanliness) referenced in this document.

- **Communication Plan**

- In the event of cancellations, closure or exposure, staff and volunteers will communicate the change ASAP using regular avenues of communication, including emails, phone calls to those who do not use email, newsletters, social media, Sunday bulletins / verbal announcements, and web site announcements
- There are many ways that WHC will maintain community during periods of social distancing
 - The WHC Caregiving Ministry (led by the Deacons) will develop a plan for interacting with members and FoF in the event of church closure or self-isolations.
 - The WHC Worship and Music Team (in conjunction with staff) will develop a plan to broadcast worship opportunities via website, social media and/or the delivery of media, e.g. DVDs
 - The WHC Family Ministry Team (in conjunction with staff) will develop a plan to engage children, youth and their parents electronically

How We Will Respond

- **Outside Use**

- WHC will suspend hosting events, meetings for outside groups for at least the next 30 days to minimize the exposure risk and reduce the cleaning demand on the WHC facilities staff.

- **Food Restriction**

- WHC will suspend food prep and serving opportunities (including Fellowship Time food service and Wednesday night meals for at least the next 30 days to minimize the exposure risk and reduce the cleaning demand on the WHC facilities staff.

- **Updated Cleaning and Disinfection Procedures**

- Facility staff will follow an updated cleaning/disinfection schedule including increased disinfection of high use areas such as restrooms, shared workspaces, food prep areas, meeting tables, door handles and handrails. Children's Ministry areas will be disinfected and then locked until the next scheduled use.
- Disinfecting wipes will be made available at key, high areas. Volunteers and staff are encouraged to use the wipes as needed
- The WHC cleaning staff will use personal protective equipment (PPE) when directed to do so by the DCHD and or the CDC. Use of this equipment will be in accordance with CDC guidelines²

- **Exposure Protocol - In the event of a confirmed exposure at WHC**

- The WHC Congregation and any affected outside groups will be notified
- The facility will be completely closed for a period of 24 hours after the exposure ends
 - All key card access will canceled
- The WHC facility staff will clean and disinfect the building according to CDC recommendations³, including:

² https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html?deliveryName=USCDC_2067-DM21539

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- *“It is recommended to **close off areas used by the ill persons and wait as long as practical before beginning cleaning and disinfection** to minimize potential for exposure to respiratory droplets. **Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the area.** If possible, wait at least 24 hours before beginning cleaning and disinfection.*
- ***Cleaning staff will clean and disinfect all areas (e.g., offices, bathrooms, and common areas) used by the ill persons, focusing especially on frequently touched surfaces.”***

Staff Response Plan

- WHC Head of Staff will assure communication with staff of WHC in the event of cancellations or closures
- Church employees will be made aware of COVID-19 symptoms. Church employees who experience symptoms will leave the facility as soon as possible and remain away until cleared by a doctor to return to work
- In the event of illness, employee compensation will be guided by the Personnel Handbook
 - The WHC Personnel Team in conjunction with the Head of Staff may choose to extend personal days beyond the current allotted amount
- If WHC cancels all activities, WHC may still allow staff to report to work in the facility
 - Decisions about church closure and staff furloughs will be made by the WHC Session
- If the WHC facility is completely closed (staff not permitted into facility) **for short periods**, church staff (especially exempt staff) will be prepared to work from home in whatever ways possible, e.g. answering emails, virtual meetings, etc.
- If the WHC facility is completely closed (staff not permitted into facility) **for an extended period** of days or weeks, the Session aims to continue regular compensation for all staff except temporary service providers, e.g. nursery care providers.
- In the event of major disruptions in the responsibilities of WHC staff, new duties and expectations may be added to existing job descriptions in order to meet a changing ministry context

Helpful Links



- **How to protect yourself:** https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/prevention.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fabout%2Fprevention-treatment.html
- **Who is at higher risk:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html>
- **Identifying Symptoms:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/symptoms.html>

Addendum as of 3/17/20

Timeline

- The restrictions in this plan will remain active until further notice
- The WHC Session will review these restrictions on a monthly basis and will communicate changes by the fourth Monday of the Month

Restricted Activity at WHC Facility

- All events and meetings (except funerals and weddings) will move to an online / phone basis or will be canceled until WHC receives further direction from the DCHD, the CDC, or another governmental agency.
 - Funerals and weddings will not exceed 9 participants
- Only essential business will take place at the WHC facility
- Only essential staff (and designated volunteers) will be admitted into the building
 - Key card access for Members and FoF will be suspended

WHC Staff

- Will observe social distancing recommendations including:
 - Avoiding gatherings of 10 or more people
 - Maintaining 6 feet of separation in all circumstances, including live meetings
 - Avoiding entering one another's office space
 - Meeting virtually when possible

WHC Activity Away from the WHC Facility

- Any gatherings coordinated by WHC should take place virtually or over the phone
- If essential church business must take place in a home or public place, the gathering may not exceed 9 participants
- Relational and pastoral care should take place virtually or over the phone. Church staff or volunteers should not visit hospitals or care facilities

Further Action

- If local or federal government agencies further restrict social interaction, the Session will close the church to everyone except essential maintenance staff