

To: Bishop  
Dennis V. Proctor  
From: Rev, Janet H. Jones, Chairperson  
RE: **THE COMMITTEE ON PROTOCOLS FOR REOPENING AME ZION CHURCH BUILDINGS**  
Date: July 20, 2021

Bishop Proctor:

I pray you are well and prepared for General Conference.

Attached is the report of the Committee appointed to develop Protocols for safely re-opening AME Zion Churches of the North Eastern Episcopal District.

The Committee met twice virtually and agreed on the attached document. I believe we have met the goal of creating an easy-to-understand set of parameters that will minimized exposure to the Coronavirus and ensure safe in-person re-gatherings of our congregations. We believe these practices can be implemented in any church building regardless of size and budget.

I thank the committee members for their diligence. I especially thank Rev. Dr. Odinga Maddox and Ms. Dorothy McFarlane who volunteered to help with the next step of helping to get congregations trained on the protocols once they are approved for use.

Please review this document and provide feedback on anything we may have omitted that would enhance the proposed practices, format changes, etc.

Thankyou for the opportunity to serve.

In Christ's service,

Janet H. Jones, Committee Chair

Committee Members:  
Rev. Robyn Anderson  
Rev. Daren Jaime  
Rev. Dr. Odinga Maddox, II  
Sis. Dorothy McFarlane  
Sis. Ordette Wells-Simms  
Rev. Julius Walls

# **Protocols for Reopening AME Zion Church Buildings North Eastern Episcopal District**

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## **Protocols for Reopening AME Zion Church Buildings North Eastern Episcopal District**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

These guidelines are for community spaces such as sanctuaries and fellowship halls. The virus that causes COVID-19 can land on surfaces. It is possible for people to become infected if they touch those surfaces and then touch their nose, mouth, or eyes. **In most situations, the risk of infection from touching a surface is low. The most reliable way to prevent infection from surfaces is to regularly wash hands or use hand sanitizer.** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>

We believe the practices presented in this document will enable congregations to put implement procedures that will provide for safe environments in the smallest and the largest church facilities.

We urge congregations to only open spaces in which they can ensure compliance.

### **PART I COMMITTEE GOALS**

1. To demonstrate a commitment to the goal of zero spread of the coronavirus, (aka covid-19 and the Delta Variant of Covid-19), following Federal (CDC), state, local government agency protocols, and AME Zion Church guidelines
2. To create safe environments for congregational and community activities as limited by government and/or church guidelines
3. To develop practices that can be used by any Congregation regardless of size
4. To develop safe, effective practices that will have with minimal financial impact
5. To develop practices that are approved by the church leadership and health advisors.

### **PART II RESOURCES EMPLOYED TO DEVELOP PROTOCOLS**

1. **FEDERAL:** Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) | CDC -  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>
2. **AME ZION CHURCH** Guidance for Reopening Churches During the 2019-2020 Coronavirus Pandemic
3. **PROTOCOLS FROM CHURCHES** whose buildings are already open and operating safely

### **OTHER HELPFUL RESOURCES:**

1. State specific and Local Government Health Covid-19 Guidelines
2. Local Church Insurance Providers
3. Congregations in local areas that have already re-opened their buildings

### **PART III      CLEANING PRIOR TO RE-OPENING**

1. Clean space(s) to remove accumulated dust and dirt.
2. All surfaces must be cleaned with soap or detergent and then disinfected. A disinfectant cleaner can be used to accomplish this in one step. Per the CDC, Lysol products are effective in killing the coronavirus. These products are also available the Bahamas and in England (Dettol). There may be other government-approved products that are more cost effective in England and the Bahamas. Approved Lysol products include:
  - Lysol (Dettol in UK) products that kill the Covid-19 virus
  - Lysol® All Purpose Cleaner EPA #777-66
  - Lysol® Kitchen Pro Antibacterial Cleaner EPA 777-91
  - Lysol® Disinfectant Spray EPA #777-99
  - Lysol® Disinfectant Spray Max Cover Mist EPA #777-127
  - Lysol® Disinfecting Wipes EPA #777-114

Also, Original Pine Sol and Clorox brand products are effective.

3. This cleaning and disinfecting can be done professionally or by in-house persons who are proficient cleaning. See Attachment # 1”Disinfectant vs Sanitizer”
4. An electrostatic sprayer or fogger may be used to apply disinfectant if the budget allows. A CDC approved, cost-effective disinfectant (INCIDE) can be purchased from Home Depot or Amazon.com. Follow all safety precautions to use and application.
5. Hand sanitizing solutions should be readily available at strategic locations within the areas of activity (Worship and Fellowship spaces, offices, restrooms, etc.). Make signage highly visible.
6. Post Covid-19 policy in highly visible place at entranceway. See Attachment #2

### **PART IV      PROTOCOLS FOR OPENED FACILITIES**

#### **PHYSICAL (AKA SOCIAL) DISTANCING is a key factor in minimizing exposure to Covid-19.**

1. Determine the maximum number of people the space can accommodate
2. Physical distancing plan must be in place for these areas. Include allowance for persons living in the same household who are exempt.
3. Physically identify/mark seating locations
4. Determine the flow of traffic to eliminate/minimize person-to-person contact. Minimize the number of entranceways and exits. If possible designate one entrance and one exit. Clearly mark entrance and exit.
5. Clearly mark Restrooms to be used. Ensure adequate supply of soap, hand-drying equipment/paper towels and sanitizer. Post signage to promote handwashing.
6. Lock or block unused spaces

**CONTACT TRACING is a key factor in notifying persons of possible exposure, identifying virus ‘Hotspots’, limiting ‘spreader events’ and promoting testing and vaccinations**

1. Registration prior to the activity. Set limit. Designate a person(s) to receive registration calls, emails, texts.
2. You may or may not be able to ask vaccination status depending on where you live.
3. Sign-in sheet for persons entering the space.
4. See sample Sign-in sheet attached. A simple note pad can be used to capture signature and phone number.

**PART V        PREPARE FOR OPENING DAY**

1. Make sure the policy is posted and highly visible
2. Make sure the congregation knows the policy and procedures
3. Train key personnel on the procedures and practices. Include Greeters, Ushers, Trustees all who will be actively involved keeping people safe. Document who is trained.
4. Encourage congregants to also bring their personal hand sanitizer

**PART VI        ENTERING THE BUILDING**

1. Make sure all entry stations are staffed and wearing the appropriate PPE ( Masks, Gloves)
2. Make sure PPE (Masks and Hand Sanitizer) is available
3. Staff will make sure every person enters with a face mask
4. Usher directs persons to designated seating
5. Have persons in place to direct the flow of traffic. If possible, traffic should flow in one direction.

**PART VII        WORSHIP SPACE PRACTICES**

1. All Participants should be physically distanced and in place wearing PPE at the start of the service– Preacher/Worship Leader, Musician(s), Singers, etc.
2. Use only the number of singers that the space allows – a single row with singers a minimum of six feet apart. Singers should not face each other when singing should wear face covering when not singing.
3. If possible, each person has his/her individual microphone. If this is not possible, use individual mic bonnets and/or have disinfectants wipes for wiping down the mic between users.
4. Continue using the modified Order of Worship used for virtual worship to keep the shortened length of the service.
5. **NO WALKING DURING THE OFFERING.** Persons may give as they enter or exit, or use long-handled baskets, or some other creative means that minimizes movement and contact.

## **PART VIII COMMUNION PRACTICES**

1. Use pre-packaged Communion wafer and juice sets.
2. The Element may be distributed by the Deaconess Ministry as persons enter the sanctuary and held until the appropriate time.
3. The pre-packaged elements may be consecrated prior to distribution and received when directed by the Celebrant.
4. Deaconess will collect the empty packages as people exit the sanctuary
5. NO Congregational Singing and Fellowship after receiving Communion

## **PART IX AFTER THE BENEDICTION**

1. Worshippers may be advised to greet one another in a manner that minimizes touching, i.e., with a wave or fist bump or elbow and instructed to leave through the designated exit maintaining physical distancing.
2. After worship fellowship in the Sanctuary or the Fellowship Hall should be minimized.
3. Direct all persons to reserve fellowship until they are outside the building

## **PART X DURING -THE-WEEK ACTIVITIES**

**Church Ministry Meetings and Bible Studies** may continue virtually or meet in-person where physical distancing, hand sanitizing and of wearing of face-coverings are enforced

## **PART XI CLEANING PRACTICES AFTER WORSHIP/BUILDING USE**

1. Perform regular cleaning after worship.
2. Disinfect all touch areas, bathrooms, all flat surfaces (tables, desks. Pulpit furniture, back of pews, doorknobs, etc.).
3. Disinfect touch areas as often as use requires.

## **Part XII SHARED SPACE PRACTICES**

1. Some churches that share space with other congregations or groups buildings. They must comply with the same policy and practices as the host Congregation.
2. **The common touch areas and equipment should be disinfected before the second congregation/group come in.**
3. **This can be done using a spray disinfectant and waiting 10-15 minutes before use.**

## **PART XIII IN CASE OF A POSITIVE COVID-19 TEST BY ANY KNOWN ATTENDEE OR STAFF:**

1. The Facility will be shut down immediately to any in-person activity for two weeks following the date of possible exposure.
2. The facility will be cleaned and disinfected prior to reopening
3. All persons who may have been exposed will be notified to seek testing and medical advice for self-quarantining. The name of the person who tested positive will not be revealed.
4. We will ensure protocols are current and adjusted as needed prior to reopening.

**PART XIV LOCAL CONGREGATION'S PLEDGE (Pastor, Trustees, other Leaders)**

1. Model the behavior we expect from others
2. Train congregation on safe practices
3. Stay abreast of Covid-19 data for your location
4. Institute measures to clean high-touch common areas frequently
5. Provide sanitization materials, training, and time to practice safe hygiene as recommended by CDC
6. Provide appropriate PPE for persons entering the church building
7. Participate in contact tracing efforts and other health initiatives and to respect the privacy of information provided by individuals
8. Administer temperature screenings and require employees, worshippers, and visitors to stay home if sick, high risk or symptomatic of any illness

**PART XV LOCAL CONGREGATION MEMBERS' PLEDGE (Each person who is trained)**

1. Model the behavior we expect from others
2. Stay at home if they in a high-risk category, feel sick or have symptoms of sickness
3. Follow hygiene guidelines, including regular handwashing
4. Wear face coverings and other PPE as required
5. Participate in health screening on arrival
6. Clean high-touch areas frequently

**ATTACHMENT**

*“What’s the difference between products that disinfect, sanitize, and clean surfaces?”*

<https://www.epa.gov/coronavirus/whats-difference-between-products-disinfect-sanitize-and-clean-surfaces>

This attachment was included. Because it is important to know the difference to ensure the correct product is used in in the appropriate areas.

**NEXT STEPS**

1. The Jersey City District of the New Jersey Conference will modify their Covid-19 Training presentation based on this document once it is approved and will host a virtual training session for the North Eastern Episcopal District.
2. The Ransom AME Zion Church Covid-19-Protocol PowerPoint Presentation. We can make this available in a format that can be modified for individual churches.