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For Immediate Release

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Church Services Should Look Different During COVID-19

HAMILTON – As Good Friday and Easter approach many churches are getting creative in how they plan on conducting church services. The Butler County General Health District (BCGHD) has received numerous emails and phone calls from local churches asking about services.

Carrie Yeager, Environmental Health Director states, “We want all congregations to feel like they can continue their worship during COVID-19. Churches are encouraged to look for ways to worship that do not involve being together in the same physical space. There are many options available to churches to conduct services in new ways other than what churches are used to.”

If a congregation wishes to have Easter services in their parking lot, the following guidelines must be followed:

1. Attendees must stay in the car in which they arrived in for the entire service. People should not get out of their cars to join together with others.
2. Families that live together may be in the same car. No other persons should join in a car with another family, or with persons they do not live with.
3. No giving out of individual pieces of candy or any other items to attendees.
4. 6 foot distances between cars must be maintained.

COVID-19 (coronavirus) is a highly infectious respiratory illness caused by a novel (new) coronavirus that spreads from person to person. The virus is thought to spread mainly between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet) through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

Public Health Recommendations to Protect Health and Safety:

1. Ensure members remain in their own cars during drive-in services.
2. Determine the number of participants/cars based on the location or parking lot size. There should be at least 6 feet between all cars.
3. Broadcast the service via car radio so members can stay in their cars with the windows up.

4. Limit the number of attendees by promoting drive-in services only to current members.
5. Encourage sick members to stay home.
6. Do not allow cars to idle during the service. (Participants should bring a generator or portable radio if they are concerned about battery life.)
7. To avoid the likelihood of spreading the virus from person to person, do not serve communion.
8. Provide a livestream or other online worship option for members who are unable to attend.
 1. Leaders can use Facebook Live and followers can watch services and join in with their own comments and prayers.
 2. If capacity allows, host a conference call with members.
 3. Videos can be shared on YouTube Live or posted to a YouTube channel with a link for text communications.
 4. Host an online worship service through Zoom. (Reduced pricing is often available for registered non-profit organizations.)
 5. If technology is a barrier, leaders can post a transcript of the service on their website or Facebook page, or e-mail the transcript to their community.

The [Ohio Department of Health Directors amended Stay at Home Order](#) exempts religious institutions. For that reason, BCGHD does not have the authority to order any churches to actually cease their operations or services. Now that the new guidelines for use of personal cloth masks by the public have gone out, anyone who chooses to attend an in-person service should be wearing a homemade cloth mask.

BCGHD has received multiple phone calls regarding Solid Rock Church and their decision to continue to hold in-person church services. Jennifer Bailer, Health Commissioner explains, "Solid Rock Church has let us know of sanitation activities they have conducted, which is great, but they are still exceeding the recommendation to gather only in groups of 10 or less. We recommend that they refrain from holding in-person services and follow the Ohio Department of Health recommendations in order to keep their congregation safe from COVID-19."

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