

COVID-19 PANDEMIC: SPIRITUAL SUPPORT DURING A SURGE Q&A

San Mateo County
December 10, 2020

INTRODUCTION:

San Mateo County Health is dedicated to ensuring the health, safety, and welfare of all our residents. We value the critical work that is being provided by our Houses of Worship during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our hope is to come together as a community and support one another along this new path.

On December 3, 2020 San Mateo County (SMC) held a webinar focused on Covid-19 Pandemic: Spiritual Support During a Surge. This webinar allowed our San Mateo County Faith Leaders to hear from Dr. Curtis Chan, Public Health, Policy and Planning Deputy Health Officer about the current Covid-19 impact on our communities, current data, resources, and priorities in preventing transmission.

Some resources that were provided (please click on the underlined link for resource):

- California Department of Public Health's [COVID-19 INDUSTRY GUIDANCE: Places of Worship and Providers of Religious Services and Cultural Ceremonies and Cultural Ceremonies](#)
- [Blueprint for a Safer Economy](#)
- [Dr. Scott Morrow June 3, 2020 Webinar](#)

The Q&A's below are from the inquiries received during the December 3, 2020 webinar.

COVID-19 SPECIFIC QUESTIONS:

ARE FACE SHIELDS ABLE TO BE USED INSTEAD OF FACE MASKS FOR A MOMENT ENCOUNTER? FOR EXAMPLE, DURING, BAPTISMS.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends against using face shields as a substitute for facial coverings or masks. The use of masks or face coverings is intended to reduce the spray of respiratory droplets from the wearer into the environment, onto another person, or onto a surface. The mask or cloth face covering should cover the nose, mouth, and chin with little to no gap. A face shield alone has very little protection for yourself. However, wearing both together prevents the small likelihood of transmission through the eyes.

HOW FAR DO DROPLETS TRAVEL ON AVERAGE OR HOW LONG DO THEY STAY IN THE AIR?

Infections with respiratory viruses are principally transmitted through three modes: contact, droplet, and airborne.

Contact transmission is infection spread through direct contact with an infectious person (e.g., touching during a handshake) or with an article or surface that has become contaminated. The latter is sometimes referred to as “fomite transmission.”

Droplet transmission is infection spread through exposure to virus-containing respiratory droplets (i.e., larger and smaller droplets and particles) exhaled by an infectious person. Transmission is most likely to occur when someone is close to the infectious person, generally within about 6 feet.

Airborne transmission is infection spread through exposure to those virus-containing respiratory droplets comprised of smaller droplets and particles that can remain suspended in the air over long distances (usually greater than 6 feet) and time (typically hours).

WHAT IS THE SPREAD LIKE IN OUTDOOR GATHERINGS, SOCIALLY DISTANCED? ANY REPORTED CASES OF TRANSMISSION IN THE COUNTY FROM THESE GATHERINGS?

We have not seen a significant theme of exposure/risk in modest size outdoor gatherings. Our medical professionals continue to avoid singing/chanting, even outdoors.

Many factors impact the risk of spread in outdoor gatherings (i.e.: number of individuals attending, length of gathering, protective measures utilized). Please refer to [Considerations for Events & Gatherings](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/considerations-for-events-gatherings.html): <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/considerations-for-events-gatherings.html>

WHEN WE FINALLY GATHER, WILL RUNNING THE FAN CONSTANTLY BE OF ANY HELP?

According to the World Health Organization, fans should be avoided when people who are not part of the immediate family are visiting, since some people could have the virus despite not having symptoms. Air blowing from an infected person directly at another in closed spaces may increase the transmission of the virus from one person to another.

[https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/coronavirus-disease-covid-19-ventilation-and-air-conditioning#:~:text=At%20home%2C%20table%20or,group%20of%20people\).](https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/coronavirus-disease-covid-19-ventilation-and-air-conditioning#:~:text=At%20home%2C%20table%20or,group%20of%20people).)

HOW CAN LARGE FAMILIES ISOLATE IF THEY DO NOT HAVE THE SPACE?

Any resident experiencing barriers in isolating if exposed to someone diagnosed as Covid-19 positive or having had a confirmed positive test themselves can receive support for alternative housing, such as in a hotel, for the period in which they need to isolate. These supports are accessed through the contact tracer with whom the person interacts.

CAN YOU DISCUSS THE DIFFICULTY OF ONE PERSON MEETING A NUMBER OF OTHER PEOPLE INDIVIDUALLY OUTSIDE, MASKED, AND SOCIALLY DISTANCED? I WORRY IF I WERE TO MEET SIX PEOPLE IN THE COURSE OF THE DAY COULD I BE A PROBLEM OF TRANSMISSION AMONG THESE PEOPLE WHO NEVER MEET.

Per CDC guidelines, each person should minimize contact with different people during the course of the day. One should always wear a mask and maintain a distance of at least 6 feet. Frequent & thorough hand washing is important, which includes washing your hands upon arrival at your destination. This will minimize the risk of the disease being transmitted to others whom we never meet.

HOW DO WE GET OUR SANCTUARIES FITTED TO HAVE BETTER AIR FLOW FOR GATHERING IN SMALL GROUPS IN THE FUTURE INSIDE? WHAT ARE THE NEEDS IN AIR

Please refer to the [CDC Guidance for COVID-19 Employer Information for Office Buildings](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/office-buildings.html) at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/office-buildings.html>

HOW IS THE LATEST RULING BY SCOTUS AFFECT THE COUNTY HEALTH ORDERS?

On December 3, 2020 The Supreme Court ordered a lower federal court to reexamine California restrictions on indoor religious services in areas hard hit by the coronavirus in light of the justices' recent ruling in favor of churches and synagogues in New York. San Mateo County will continue to adhere to the recommendations from the state.

FAITH SERVICES SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

AIRBORNE DROPLETS ARE SHARED THROUGH SINGING, TALKING, COUGHING, ETC.. , HOW DO MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS APPLY TO AIRBORNE DROPLETS?

It is unclear at this time if playing musical instruments transmit Covid-19. However, public health officials have recommended suspending performances that involve wind instruments (i.e.: trumpet, horns, tubas, flutes, etc.)

CAN YOU GO OVER THE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GRAVESIDE SERVICES, IF THIS HASN'T YET BEEN COVERED?

Please refer to the CDC recommendations: Funeral Guidance for Individuals and Families found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/funeral-guidance.html>

A PERSON IS WORKING IN A ROOM AT A CHURCH AND IS UNMASKED. THEY ARE WORKING ALONE OR ONLY WITH MEMBERS OF THEIR HOUSEHOLD. AFTER THEY ARE DONE - HOW LONG WOULD A CLOUD OF AEROSOL HANG AROUND AND BE DANGEROUS TO OTHERS WHO MIGHT COME INTO THE ROOM LATER? I KNOW VENTILATION PLAYS A ROLE, TOO.

Per the CDC guidelines, Prevention of COVID-19 by airborne transmission Existing (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/more/scientific-brief-sars-cov-2.html>) interventions to prevent the spread of SARS-CoV-2 appear sufficient to address transmission both through close contact and under the special circumstances favorable to potential airborne transmission. Among these interventions, which include social distancing, use of masks in the community, hand hygiene, and surface cleaning and disinfection, ventilation, and avoidance of crowded indoor spaces are especially relevant for enclosed spaces, where circumstances can increase the concentration of suspended small droplets and particles carrying infectious virus.

IS THERE A DISTANCE AT WHICH SINGING IN OUTDOOR SETTINGS IS SAFE -OR- PLAINLY SPEAKING- SHOULD WE JUST SAY NO TO SINGING (I'M THINKING OF OUTDOOR CHRISTMAS CAROLING) & HOW ABOUT SINGING MASKED, OUTSIDE, 15 FT DISTANCE BETWEEN SINGERS AND CONGREGATION, ALSO SOCIALLY DISTANCED.

Singing and chanting, a mainstay of many services, while very comforting and healing is about the best way you could think of to spread the virus far and wide and infect many. The particular problem is that this creates aerosols that spread far distances. This is not recommended at indoor nor outdoor gatherings. Even 6ft and 10 ft away can cause a super spreader event. The recommendation is to only sing on a virtual platform.

IF IT'S BETTER TO JUST COMPLETELY SUSPEND IN-PERSON ACTIVITIES UNTIL SAY NEXT SUMMER?

Balancing what you know of your community and their spiritual needs and what you're reading about the virus is important. Disease prevention would say no in-person services until all get vaccinated.

TESTING AND VACCINE SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

DOES SAN MATEO COUNTY HAVE A VACCINATION PLAN?

A safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine is one of the most critical interventions to end the COVID-19 pandemic. In active partnership with the state and federal government, San Mateo County Health is committed to being transparent, careful, and above all, equitable in providing COVID-19 vaccines to everyone who needs and requests vaccination. Please refer to our [COVID-19 Vaccination Program](https://www.smchealth.org/covid-19-vaccination) web page for further information at <https://www.smchealth.org/covid-19-vaccination>.

Additionally, to review the [COVID-19 VACCINATION PLAN, SAN MATEO COUNTY](https://www.smchealth.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/san_mateo_county_mass_vaccination_plan.pdf?1607134400) please visit https://www.smchealth.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/san_mateo_county_mass_vaccination_plan.pdf?1607134400

IF VACCINATED MIX WITH UNVACCINATED ARE THE VACCINATED AT RISK FOR RE-INFECTION? ARE THEY ABLE TO TRANSMIT?

Per Jill Henning, Associate Professor of Biology, University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, the Covid-19 vaccine is only RNA, therefore it cannot be transmitted to others. There is no risk of acquiring the infection from someone who has been vaccinated.

IS THERE A BREAKDOWN OF VACCINE PARTICIPANTS BY RACE?

Per reports, in clinical trials for the Pfizer and BioNTEch vaccine, 10% of U.S. participants were Black and 13% of subjects were Latino (13% and 19% of the U.S. population, respectively). Asian and American Indian participation was roughly in line with population numbers.

In the Moderna vaccine trials, 20% of participants were Latino, 10% black and 4% were Asian, under Asians 6% share of the U.S. population. Data on American Indians were not provided.

Namandje Bumpus, Director of the Pharmacology and Molecular Sciences Department at John Hopkins University states that the aforementioned trials are more ethnically diverse than most trials.

CAN YOU EXPLAIN HOW THE VACCINE WAS CREATED AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS? IS THERE A RACE COMPONENT?

The CDC has a helpful section on [Frequently Asked Questions about Vaccinations](#). Specifically, you can find information on 1. Planning for a vaccine, Vaccine Development, 3. Getting Vaccinated and 4. Safety.

WILL THE COUNTY CONSIDER UTILIZING LOCAL CHURCHES AS TESTING SITES AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY, VACCINE DISTRIBUTION/TAKING THE VACCINE?

San Mateo County has engaged faith leaders in supporting testing efforts. This opportunity has depended on the flow of the physical plant. This will be the same for the vaccine. If you want to volunteer your site for these opportunities please contact SMC Health Liaison at HLT_Liaison@smcgov.org.

RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS

CAN WE GET A COPY OF THE RESOURCES FROM THIS WEBINAR?

Yes, please refer to the information below (please click on the underlined link for resource):

1. [Covid-19 Pandemic: Spiritual Support During a Surge webinar](#)
2. [Covid-19 Pandemic: Spiritual Support During a Surge powerpoint](#)
3. [Office of Diversity & Equity \(ODE\)](#)
4. [Behavioral Health & Recovery Services Spirituality Initiative](#)
5. [San Mateo County Office of Community Affairs](#)

HOW DO I GET ON THE “LIST” FOR NOTIFICATIONS FOR SAN MATEO COUNTY CLERGY?

Learn about our San Mateo County Office of Diversity and Equity (ODE) that is dedicated to creatively bringing discussions of inequities, disparities, and injustice front and center in our work. We invite you to visit our page (<https://www.smchealth.org/office-diversity-equity>), read our [ODE blog](https://smcbhrsblog.org/category/office-of-diversity-equity/) (<https://smcbhrsblog.org/category/office-of-diversity-equity/>) and/or get on our [ODE Mailing list](https://service.govdelivery.com/accounts/CASMATEO/subscriber/new?topic_id=CASMATEO_239) (https://service.govdelivery.com/accounts/CASMATEO/subscriber/new?topic_id=CASMATEO_239). You can also join one of our [San Mateo County Health Equity Initiatives \(HEI\)](https://www.smchealth.org/health-equity-initiatives) and attend one of our 9 HEI Monthly meetings (<https://www.smchealth.org/health-equity-initiatives>). Our Spirituality Initiative collaboratively explore, increase awareness of, and support spirituality and its relationship to health and well-being, especially for those with or at risk of co-occurring alcohol/drug addiction and mental health challenges.

Become part of the Peninsula Solidarity Cohort, a group of over 40 interfaith clergy and faith leaders working for social justice in our county, please email peninsulasolidarity@ccsm-ucc.org for additional information.

WHAT SUPPORT OR FINANCIAL RESOURCES MIGHT BE AVAILABLE TO US FOR VIRTUAL MEETINGS?

San Mateo County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services (BHRS), Office of Diversity and Equity (ODE) is reviewing opportunities to provide technology trainings to our communities and community organizations. Please contact our Spirituality Initiative co-chairs and join their mailing list to become aware of these opportunities.

DO WE HAVE A SITE TO COLLECT MASKS – WHERE CAN WE DROP MASKS OFF TO DISTRIBUTE TO THE COMMUNITY?

Yes, San Mateo County has secured masks to distribute and has partnerships to support distribution. Additionally, mask donations are accepted. Please contact our Office of Community Affairs at 650-363-1800 for additional details.