



GEMBC COVID-19 RE-OPENING PROTOCOLS

This document is a live file that will help guide our GEMBC Board of Directors in re-opening our church for worship services and all communal uses in a safe and comprehensive way.

This document was commissioned by Pastor Matthew Jenkins and the Board of Directors of GEMBC

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Greater Elizabeth Missionary Baptist Church Reopening Protocol Manual

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INTRODUCTION

*"Where there is no guidance, a nation falls,
but in an abundance of counselors, there is safety."
Proverbs 11:14*

Greater Elizabeth Missionary Baptist Church is a multi-generational church that takes the holistic approach to impact the Community and the World for the Cause of Jesus Christ. We are committed to glorifying God by being Christ-centered Worship and Service. We are Holy Spirit-led, missions and evangelism focused and relying totally upon the Bible as the Word of God and our guide. We inspire one another to live an abundant life in Christ as we seek the Salvation of the Lost; this has always been our focus, but the times we are currently living requires us to develop different methods and operations to achieve our mission.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) disease has brought about unforeseen, exceptional circumstances. It is a global pandemic that has resulted in extreme health crises, staggering incidences of positive cases in massive numbers. A total for Georgia alone of 14,024 people have died from COVID-19 as of January/2021. The pandemic has caused local and national government agencies to mandate that citizens shelter-at-home and practice many other out-of-the-ordinary safety measures. Faith communities across the U.S. and around the world closed their doors to in-person worship and ministries. When Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms issued a 14-day "stay at home" Executive Order, effective March 24, 2020, to be Spiritually and socially responsible, GEMBC closed its facility. Because of the continued spread of the virus, our building remains closed.

Presently, we recommend that we wear a mask, wash our hands, and watch our distance (at least 6 feet). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), along with our state and local health departments, believe these measures will keep the pandemic controlled, ultimately "flattening the curve" and eliminate the disease. Guidelines for re-opening facilities and activities have been developed. Updates come from the (CDC), federal and local governments, health departments, the City of Atlanta, and various national religious organizations. From these national updates and guidelines, with the direction of God, Greater Elizabeth will make the ultimate decision as to when to re-open our church campus fully.

We do not want to re-open our facility and resume gatherings prematurely, with congregants possibly needing to choose between the safety of themselves and others and participation in the congregational life that has been re-established. It is necessary that we are intentional about how and when to resume in-person worship and other activities. Developing this protocol manual for GEMBC re-opening was central for this consideration. Using information and guidance from the CDC, public health experts, local government, churches, and judicatories around the United States, as well as GEMBC Pastor and Board of Directors have outlined a phased approach.

*** Activities and Practices Since Closure in March/2020 ***

In all instances below where persons were required to be in the building or on the grounds, they wore masks and practiced physical distancing.

- A. Recording in the facility for virtual Sunday services – pastor, vocal ensemble, musicians and security.
- B. Virtual worship services broadcasted on Sundays.
- C. Designated staff on-site two days per week (or more as needed) for facility maintenance, mail, finances, recording, sanitizing after use.
- D. Facility closed for all meetings and in-person worship services.
- E. Daily teleconference and video conference prayer calls on Tuesday evenings.
- F. Meetings and workshops via teleconferencing or video conferencing.

PHASES Of RE-OPENING

Phases of Re-opening (leading to a full return to the facility)

We intend to re-open Greater Elizabeth Missionary Baptist Church in phases based on COVID-19 circumstances rather than specific dates. We will be continually alert to the metrics of the county and state related to the trajectory of the disease. We will watch the metrics in 14-day spans (using 7-day trailing average) of COVID cases – COVID hospitalizations – percent of positive COVID tests (References - Opening Up America Again – White House; City of Atlanta Reopening Phases), looking for a continual decrease. We will also be attentive to any mandates of the state of Georgia and guidance of the City of Atlanta. It may be necessary to move back and forth between phases if there are changes in waves of infections, metrics change, and advice of public health officials.

During the early phases, the following persons are encouraged to stay at home and enjoy virtual services:

****Those at increased risk of severe illness due to age.**

****Those with underlying medical conditions.**

(Reference: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/peopleat-increased-risk.html>)

Phase One

- A. Staff who work in the building return full time. Training on new safety practices; Physical distancing, and masks required.
- B. Persons allowed to come in to see staff for business purposes; masks required.
- C. Temperatures are taken of staff, volunteers, and any others upon entry each time.
- D. Virtual services continued.
- E. Virtual meetings/workshops continued.
- F. In-person worship with no more than 50 people.

Phase Two

(the beginning of which most of the protocol is related)

- A. One worship service in the sanctuary with a maximum of 100 people. (References: COVID-19 Industry Guidance, California; Supreme Court Decision No. 19A1044) Persons register their intent to attend and list checked upon entry (see Entry/Exit on page 8).
- B. Physical distancing and masks required.
- C. Virtual meetings/workshops continued.
- D. We will re-open in person Sunday school and bible studies (both will be in the sanctuary when a person registers for Sunday morning service; they will also have a chance to register for Sunday school).
- E. Youth must wear masks while in the building. Youth Services/events will be virtual.

Phase Three

- A. One worship service with up to 200 persons in the sanctuary;
- B. Physical distancing and masks encouraged.
- C. Online streaming of the in-person service
- D. Virtual meetings/workshops continued for more than 50 persons.
- E. Possible small group meetings with <50 people, physical distancing practiced.
 - We will allow 50% capacity of room occupancy. Bible study and Sunday school can resume in their designated classrooms at 50% percent capacity.
- F. Life rituals such as weddings and celebration of life services allowed with a maximum of 100 people, masks required, and other relevant protocols.

Phase Four

- A. Full return to the building and activities
- B. In-person worship services
- C. Youth ministry operational in-person
- D. Streaming of sanctuary service
- E. Masks and other COVID-19 precautions still followed.

Online Registration

Any person who desires to join our in-person worship service must have successfully submitted an online registration form. This form will be on the Eventbrite platform. Each family or individual will have to register. Within the registration form, general information will be requested, including but not limited to: name of all family members planning to attend service, contact information, previous traveling history, any illness or symptomatic status, and a signed waiver to not hold Greater Elizabeth liable if the church reasonably protects members and visitors from contracting COVID-19. Once the online registration is submitted, the family or individual will receive a confirmation email that the church database has received their information. Once our COVID-19 health team has reviewed it, they will receive an email informing them they are cleared to enter the campus on their designated Sunday.

Sunday Morning Protocols

These protocols will guide our staff, volunteers, and members on best practices for safety and efficiency when entering Greater Elizabeth Missionary Baptist Church's campus. These protocols will guide us when members or visitors are ready to register for our in-person services. These guidelines are subject to change as needed, but they have been discussed and vetted for everyone's safety on the church grounds. Those who have registered for attendance of a worship service/Sunday school and will have signed the COVID-19 waiver form. Registered attendees will enter the church with a mask on and have their temperatures checked.

Parking Lot Protocols

Once a family or individual arrives on Greater Elizabeth's campus, parking lot attendants will greet them and show them their designated parking spot. Once they have parked, one of our parking lot volunteers will check them in. The volunteer will approach the car and confirm the participants with their corresponding registration. They will be asked additional questions to make sure they are cleared to enter the building. Once they have been adequately screened, we will ask them to stay in their cars until preparation has been made to come into the building and take their designated seats. The parking lot protocols will be active and in place during the first two phases of our re-entry. Once we have reached stage 3 of re-entry, parking lot protocols will be in place as needed.

Building Entry Protocols

Once the family or individual has entered the building, they will be met by the onboarding team. This team will be responsible for checking temperatures, providing masks and any other needed items, including a wrist band clearing you to be in the building, addressing any last-minute issues with registration, and showing members and visitors to their seats. Our onboarding team will secure our restrooms to ensure the designated number of individuals within restrooms are consistent. You receive your tithing envelope and, if necessary, your communion package; you will also have the ability to drop your tithes and offering off in the designated areas before service. Once the onboarding team has shown you to your seat, we ask that you remain seated during the 1 hour and 30-minute service unless you are going to the restroom.

Worship Service Protocols

Seating - Seating within the sanctuary will be spaced out to at least 6-9 feet apart. Families who live together will be asked to sit together during service. Everyone else will have to sit in their designated seating to secure the distance and safety for all individuals involved.

Communion - The Church will no longer pass trays of communion wafers and juice during communion. We will provide wafer and juice packets that come as one unit. If some individuals are having problems opening their container we will have designated individuals who will assist.

Tithes and Offering - Members and visitors will have the opportunity to give as you enter the worship service and as you leave. We will not be marching around the sanctuary. There will be designated areas where you can drop your offering off as you enter and as you exit. We are encouraging members to fill out their tithing envelopes before they arrive at church or while they sit in their car waiting to enter the building. We also encourage members to give via Givelify or Cash App.

Baptism - We will start baptizing new converts during the 3rd phase of our re-entry. We ask new converts to bring white shirts and black pants that they don't mind getting wet. We also ask they bring a change of clothes as they will need to get changed after they have been baptized. Because there is one men's and women's restroom in the Baptism area, only one individual can be in that space at a time. We will give further directions to our Baptism candidates if more space is needed.

Building Exit Protocols

Once service ends, to make sure there is no mass exit that could cause overexposure of anyone's personal space, we will be exiting the sanctuary in sections. There will be three exit areas: The main quadruple doors and the two side doors on either end of the choir stand. We ask that people would exit the door that is closest to their designated parking spot. As much as we would love to fellowship after service within the sanctuary, we ask any conversations be held outside in the open air to mitigate the possibility of COVID-19 transmission. Tithing and offering stations will be placed at the doors as you exit.

Cleaning Protocols and Cleaning Equipment Acquisitions

During the church's regular weekly cleaning, the cleaning crew will add a second layer of protection against potential germs and impurities by re-wiping with Lysol. Disinfectant wipes all frequently touched areas and surfaces as bathroom toilets, sinks, countertops, and water dispenser handles. Plus, all door handles and light switches throughout the entire church. Additional cleanings will be added if any events are held within a less than 7 days time frame.

Positive COVID TEST Guidelines

If anyone has contracted COVID-19 and were present at one of our church services, we will do our very best to inform all of those at the service and our members at large. While we will not formally announce who the individual is without their permission, we will be able to share with you that someone has been exposed or is believed to have contracted while on the church premises. From there, we will engage in the following protocols.

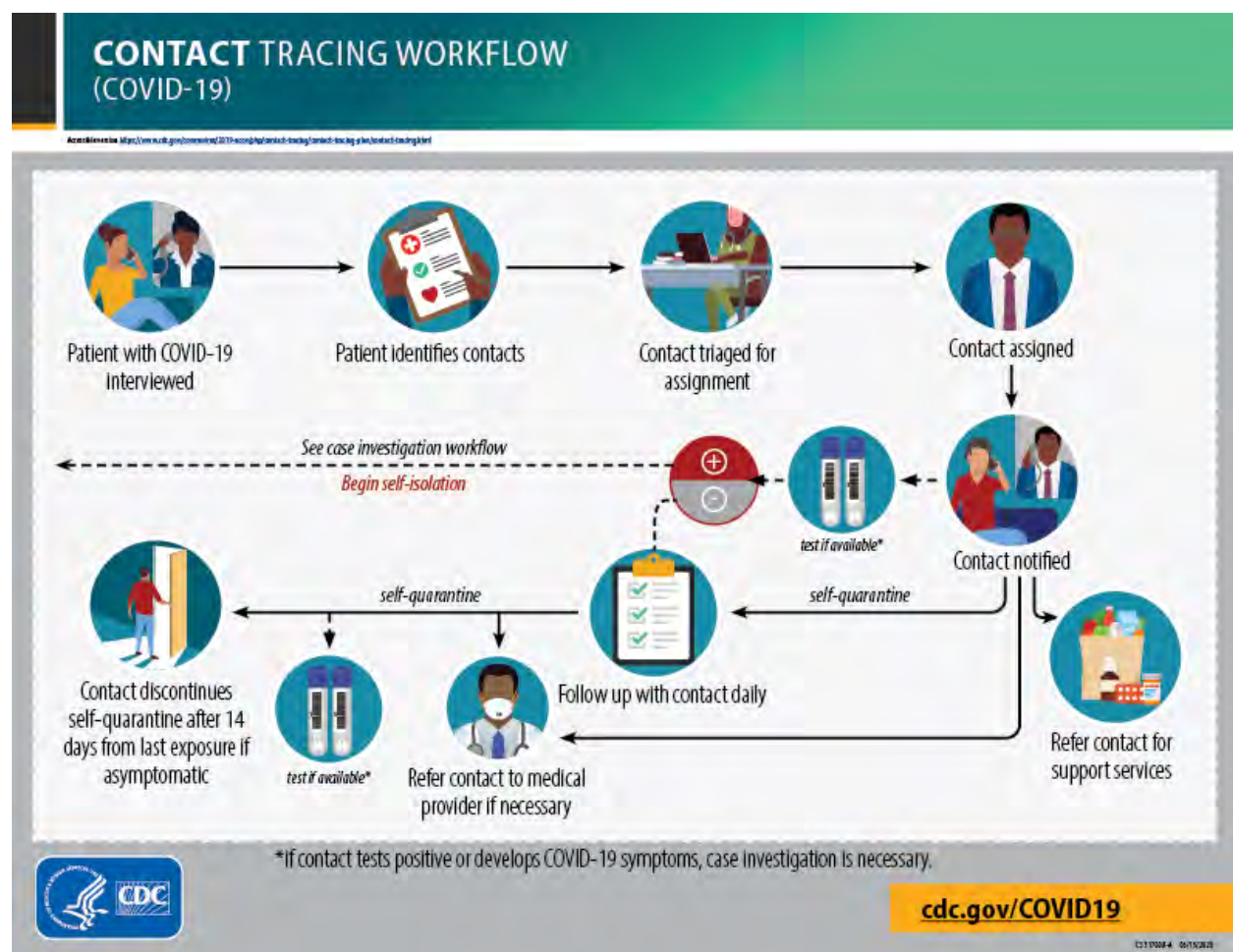
COMMUNICATION WITH THE CONGREGATION

We will inform the congregation that someone has contracted COVID-19 or has been exposed to COVID-19 that could have potentially put the members or visitors at risk. We will immediately communicate with those members who attended the service through email, and we will let the church know at large through calling post. In the communication, we will share as much detail as we legally can. We will allow the congregants to know, based upon the Pastor and Board of Director's decision, if services need to be suspended and return to virtual services or if we need to downgrade our phase. If we need to discontinue services, we will communicate the

congregation's role in safely resuming services and activities in the building through their compliance with requested procedures. Enlist their prayer and support while affirming their patience.

CONTACT TRACING

The goal of contact tracing is to interrupt the spread of the disease by notifying those in close contact to someone who tested positive for COVID-19 to take precautionary measures. Keeping infection rates low to avoid outbreaks and pandemic levels is critical for community health officials, and they need help from the community to make it effective.¹ If we find multiple members have contracted COVID-19, we will work with our local health department to help with contact tracing. Listed below is a CDC graph on how an individual should engage in COVID-19 contact tracing. If we are assigned to make contact with individuals who are exposed to the infected person (being exposed is defined as anyone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes starting from 48 hours before the person began feeling sick until the time the infected person was isolated.)



PREPARATION OF THE PROPERTY & FACILITY

1. Inspect the building and grounds for obvious hazards or maintenance needs that may have emerged during the closure. Make the necessary repairs.
2. Inspect and clean or repair HVAC systems, as necessary. Ensure that ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows/doors, using fans, etc.
3. Tape off the water fountain for non-use or ensure that all water systems and features (for example, drinking fountains) are safe to use after a prolonged facility shutdown to minimize the risk of Legionnaires' disease and other diseases associated with water. (CDC)
4. Clean throughout the facility and in the manner needed. Use chemicals and disinfectants approved by EPA as effective for COVID-19. Post "Do Not Enter/Use – Sanitized" signs (or something similar) as cleaning is done to prepare for re-entry. Sources of information for what, when, and how to clean.
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html>
<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2-covid-19>
5. Limit the sharing of frequently touched objects (CDC) by removing offering envelopes, information cards, envelopes, pens, brochures, etc., from the backs of seats in sanctuary, counters, tables, and information centers.
6. Promote physical distancing of six feet (except for those of the same household) with signage and room set up.
7. In the sanctuary, use tape to separate seating. Designate section 4 for families and those from the same household unit. Designate row(s) for those participating in service.
8. Acquire a sufficient supply of the necessary cleaning elements to support the increased level and frequency of cleaning required for the first phases of program resumption.
9. Obtain and maintain an adequate stock of toilet tissue, soap, hand sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol), facial tissue, disposable paper towels, and other items needed for individual health hygiene. Also items for staff and volunteers such as masks and gloves.
10. Acquire any new equipment required for resuming programming, such as

temporal scan thermometers and portable hand-sanitizing stations.

11. Install hand sanitizing stations or bottles throughout the building. They should be at a level that is accessible to those in wheelchairs.
 - Bottles of hand sanitizer at each Ushers' station in the sanctuary
 - Bottles of hand sanitizer on backs of toilets, where possible.
 - Where appropriate, supply wipes or disinfectant for individuals.

TRAINING

1. Provide training for the Board of Directors, Church staff, Production Team, Deacons, and ministry leaders to ensure that they understand the phased re-opening plan and protocols.
2. Designate those who will take temperatures of staff and volunteers and of congregants and others. Provide training in temperature taking and what is to be done if temperatures are above acceptable degrees.
3. Designate and train a COVID Response Team and provide the appropriate protective equipment and supplies.
4. Designated staff will verify registration and release forms are completed. Scanned QR codes will house documents.

References

Church Music in the Age of COVID-19 by Wisconsin Council of Churches – Retrieved from <https://www.wichurches.org/2020/04/23/returning-to-church/>

City of Atlanta, Reopening Phases Recommended Guideline – Retrieved from <https://atlstrong.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/COAReopeningPhases.pdf>

Cleaning and Disinfecting the Facility:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html>
<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2-covid-19>

<https://www.brotherhoodmutual.com/resources/safety-library/risk-management-articles/disasters-emergencies-and-health/general-health-and-injury-prevention/coronavirus-exposure>

(Reference: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-increased-risk.html>)

Recommendations for a Safe Return to Worship by Church Mutual Insurance – Retrieved from <https://p.widencdn.net/r87ip0/CM0308-2020-05-RC-Recommendationsfor-a-Safe-Return-to-Worship>