

Questions submitted as of Wednesday, May 20 at 10:15 AM

**Responses written by:**

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**1. What is the earliest date that you would recommend a building reopen for services?**

The date a building should be reopen depends on the congregation's ability to provide appropriate supplies to encourage frequent hand hygiene and enforce social distancing protocol. Each congregation should have a complete plan for tracking those who attend services and a response plan for handling positive cases of COVID-19 in their congregation.

**2. What is the hospital using to sanitize public spaces? What should we use?**

The Medical Center uses a solution called Virex Plus® (or other approved germicidal solution) to clean and disinfect. There are a number of cleaning solutions that will disinfect - including bleach solutions.

For more information please see the Cleaning + Disinfecting resource located in the [Business Resource Center](#).

**3. Do you recommend congregational singing?**

Group singing, such as choirs, should be limited. Plan for a few individuals to lead your worship experience and ensure they are feeling well before and after the service.

Singing is an action that lends itself to producing more respiratory droplets - transmission risk becomes higher with increased exposure. Congregational singing should be limited. As with all aspects of this germ, if no one in the choir is infected then there is no problem - - but that cannot be reasonably confirmed. All it takes is one person becoming ill, shedding the virus and not yet feeling sick.

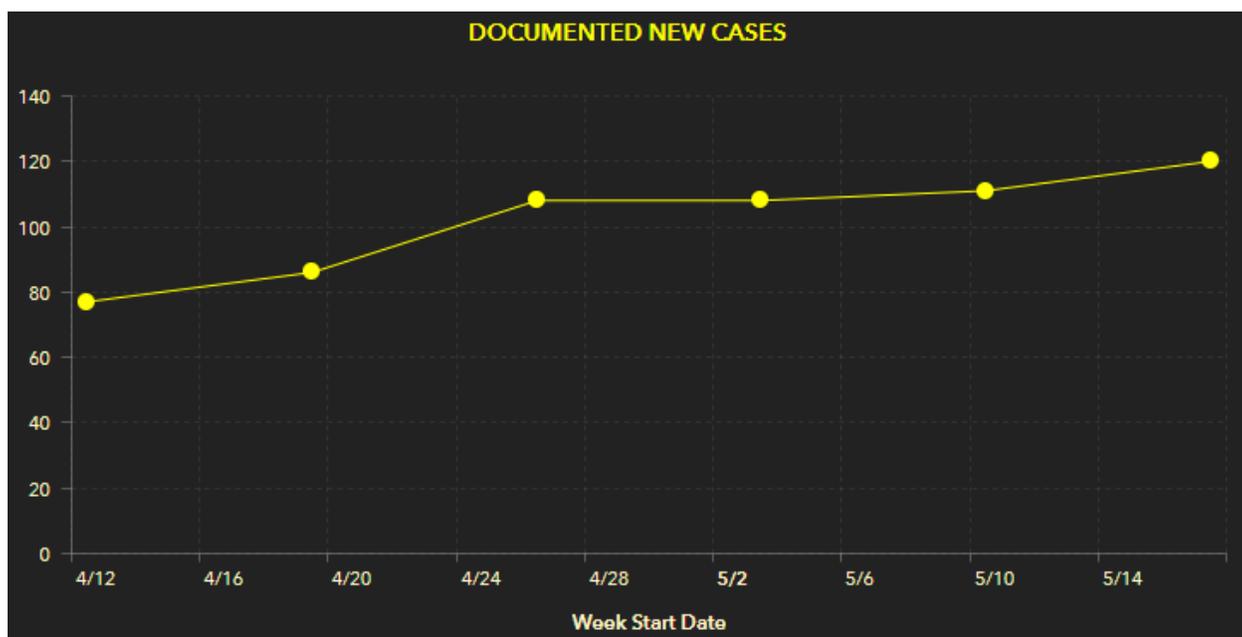
**4. Is testing open to anyone at this time?**

COVID-19 testing is not yet available to all Polk County residents. A doctor's order is currently required at all Lakeland Regional Health testing sites.

**5. Has Polk County experienced a downward trajectory of documented cases within a 14 day period OR a downward trajectory of positive tests as a % of total tests within a 14 day period as per "Opening Up America Again"?**

Polk County has not experienced the 14-day downward trajectory of COVID-19 cases. Now, the number of new positive cases seem to be stagnant and are neither decreasing nor increasing in any significant direction.

Below is the graph of new cases for Polk:



**6. 75% of our congregation is over 80 years old. Is it safe to meet corporately again?**

The CDC recommends that older adults and people with underlying chronic medical conditions should be more cautious when dealing with this virus. It is recommended that people practice social distancing and keep a distance of 6 feet among themselves. Following standard hand hygiene can help but it is ultimately advised that the elderly stay home if possible. There are multiple new ways to interact online that would help protect older people who have a greater risk of contracting the virus.

**7. We would like accurate local information about numbers of people being infected, numbers surviving, etc. to help us better time our return to fellowship.**

Approximately 30% of those infected and contagious have no symptoms and therefore may not seek testing. Up to 80% of those infected and contagious might have mild to no symptoms and for that reason, might not seek testing. Very limited antibody testing that is not fully understood at this time indicates that not too many people in our area have been infected. That is good and bad. It is good that a large number

were not infected early on when the medical community was not as prepared as they are today. But a low number infected at this point always puts us at risk for a surge in cases.

As of today (Wednesday, May 27) in Polk County, a total of 907 cases of COVID-19 have been reported as test positive. There are more who have not been tested but we do not know that number. Of the people infected, 54 people have died, and 265 people have been hospitalized. Most of the hospitalizations and deaths have been elderly or those with chronic underlying medical conditions, such as obesity, high blood pressure and diabetes.

Up to date COVID statistics can be found on the Polk County Department of Health COVID-19 Resource page:

<https://www.polk-county.net/covid-19/covid-19-statistics>

**8. Do you know when hospital visitation, limited, might start again?**

The hospital limits the number of visitors into the hospital to protect the patients, healthcare providers, and community at large. However, the hospital has allowed some exceptions and visitors can visit under these circumstances. The nature under which a person can visit the hospital can be found on the [LRH Visitor and Companion policy page](#). At this time, there is not a planned change to this policy.

**9. Is there a hurry, when the potential for a spike in infection is still a very real possibility? Do we serve the community better by continuing to avoid potential outbreaks/clusters because large groups gathered?**

Polk County has not experienced a spike in cases since the beginning of the pandemic so it is very likely that there can be a surge of cases as protective guidelines are relaxed. It is recommended in Phase 1 of this Recovery that large gatherings are avoided to prevent a surge of cases. It is also advised that people maintain a distance of 6 feet between themselves in gatherings of people. The community leaders are trying to understand the full negative impact of closing the economy such as the impact on hunger, poverty, education and mental health that isolation brings.

**10. Should detailed records of processes used be kept and for how long?**

The processes used to manage the virus right now could prove to be useful in the future if there is a resurgence in cases. A record can help us learn from mistakes while allowing for sharing of best practices.

**11. How can we get our congregations to feel more comfortable with coming to church when they cannot visit their loved ones in hospitals. How do they manage the mixed messages for safety?**

Make every effort to reduce transmission visible to others. For example, surfaces may have been wiped down earlier but it is often good to do it in plain view of others. The same is true for hand hygiene: a person may have just washed their hands in the bathroom, but it helps to also use hand sanitizer in front of others before that person touches other items.

Make it clear that every decision is well thought out and has layers of reasons to support an action. We are seeing this in many places: As soon as you enter, you are asked to sanitize your hands (not optional); people are asked about illnesses, exposures, recent testing and fever; spaces within the building a marked designating 6 feet; masks are worn to protect others and upon leaving, hand sanitizers are available.

The limitation of visitors at medical facilities is to protect the safety and wellbeing of our most vulnerable patients as well as our team members. It is not a reason to delay medical care. Through a number of safety precautions, our medical facilities have never stopped being safe to come to for regular medical care, and that continues today. The same should be said of houses of worship once safety precautions are put in place.

**12. Unable to find touchless hand sanitizing equipment. Any suggestions?**

There is no difference between touchless hand sanitizing equipment and non-touchless hand sanitizing equipment in spreading COVID-19. When using manual hand sanitizing equipment, the person still ends up cleansing their hands after touching the equipment. Both equipment works equally as well in disinfecting hands of diseases. But keep in mind, after cleaning your hands, your fingers become contaminated when touching your phone - - so wipe you phone first with a product that is safe for your equipment.

**13. Should we encourage our congregation to wear masks?**

Yes, everyone is encouraged to wear facemasks to slow the transmission of COVID-19. We wear facemasks to protect those around us.

**14. Should our church conduct a deep-cleaning prior to reopening?**

All places where gathering takes place and businesses should conduct frequent cleaning to kill the COVID-19 virus. Cleaning and disinfecting should happen before and after each gathering and/or service. For additional tips and best practices on cleaning visit [www.myLRH.org/businessresources](http://www.myLRH.org/businessresources).