



County of Los Angeles Coronavirus (COVID-19) Economic Resiliency Task Force Faith Based Organization Sector Recommendation Report

Summary

We affirm the wisdom of the Board of Supervisors in reaching out to the community for recommendations on the return to work strategy for the County. We believe that faith based organizations play a central role in the life of the County and, as such, need to “return to work” in their own right and to provide support to everyone seeking to envision a “new normal” during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Goals and Recommendations for Recovery:

Goal: To develop actionable recommendations that will lead to recovery in Los Angeles County. Our Sector will focus on safe ways to open up faith institutions.

Vision: We are guided by our shared belief in the sanctity of human life and the imperative to protect the health of our congregants and our community.

Short Term Goals:

1. Respond to the County Plan (released 5-26-2020)
2. Frame broad concerns, issues, challenges, opportunities, and recommendations for the faith community
3. Initiate a review of the economic impact on the broader economy
4. Create the thread that incorporates a faith perspective in each of the other Sector recommendations
5. Recommend the establishment of Faith-based offices in LA County Depts. (similar to the model at the federal level)
6. Clarify the protocol for how to respond to positive cases, and their contacts, among congregants.

Major Issues and Challenges to the FB sector. Main barriers to addressing the challenges:

- **Social Distancing in Worship:** We recognize the need for physical distancing to protect health and limit the spread of COVID-19. We also recognize that such measures are often challenging for established rituals and worship practices. The sizes and approved occupancy levels of physical spaces in places of worship are highly variable. Attendance limitations based on an absolute number of attendees may not consider the many ways in which people may gather in places of worship consistent with the requirements of social distancing.

- **On Site Services:** Many places of worship also distribute goods and needed services. Protocols for worship services do not necessarily apply to these functions. There is a need for guidance on the safe delivery of these services. Classes for adults and children may also be delivered on-site in many places of worship. Protocols for conducting classes should be coordinated with those developed in the education sector.
- **Other Services:** Many faith based organizations organize home fellowships, affinity groups, beyond recovery programs and more. Guidance for safely delivering these services is also needed. The same is true for rituals such as baptism that may not take place in the context of a worship service.
- **Visiting the sick and the dying:** Easing a person’s passage through illness and death is an essential function for faith based organizations. There is a need to work cooperatively with healthcare organizations to enable clergy to safely provide this necessary service. Such coordination should also be extended to nursing homes, assisted living and other congregate living facilities, mortuaries and cemeteries.
- **Infection Control:** Faith based organizations may need technical and financial support to bring their HVAC systems up to standard to limit the spread of COVID-19. They may also need support in obtaining appropriate cleaning supplies and protective equipment. Access to resources is vital (e.g. free energy audits, rebates and other incentives)
- **Positive Cases:** Faith based organizations need clear protocols from the Department of Health for how to respond to positive cases, and their contacts, among congregants. These protocols need to be proactively shared with clergy, staff, and other key persons.
- **Timely and Clear Communication:** Faith based organizations are subject to protocols and guidance from cities, the county and the state. These protocols are subject to periodic review and revision as the epidemic ebbs and flows. It is very challenging to keep track of this changing and at times conflicting guidance. Every effort should be made to inform faith based organizations in a timely manner when restrictions tighten and - equally important- when conditions permit easing of restrictions. Health orders should contain “user friendly” links to orders from other jurisdictions and health officials should make use of religious media and organizations focusing on faith based organizations and clergy to communicate changes in guidance.
- **Training is vital** as we return to places of worship. Functions such as parking, seating, screening, serving etc. need to be conducted in ways that protect health and safety. Clergy, staff and congregants all need training in new ways of doing things. Training videos and other resources will be needed.

OPPORTUNITIES – What ideas would you like to bring forward to the Board of Supervisors?

- **Ensure geographic equity for testing:** In some regions of the county residents are paying up to \$150 without knowledge that the county and city are providing the same

service at no charge. Church and faith locations can serve as testing locations and resource centers.

- **Create a Variance Process for Individual Congregations:** Given the diversity of places of worship, one-size-fits-all protocols are likely to cause problems, confusion and ultimately a lack of confidence in the guidance and orders of public health authorities. We propose the consideration of a variance process by which public health guidance may be adapted to local circumstances so that gathering space can be safely maximized.
- **Stimulate economic activity:** The safe opening of places of worship will also serve to stimulate economic activity more broadly by enhancing public confidence.
- **Close the digital divide:** The use of smart phones and other digital platforms such as zoom and social media are enabling new options for worship and for the other forms of engagement with faith. Training, particularly for older congregants, may accelerate adoption of these technologies to enable worship and service during the COVID-19 epidemic.
- **Mobilize our resources:** Use our facilities for testing sites and as locations for health education centers. Use our value as “trusted voices” to address mental health issues (including depression, isolation and suicide prevention,) and to help address abuses of all kinds (substance abuse, child abuse, sexual abuse, family violence, elder abuse). Create social enterprises that leverage trusted traditions of service in partnership with public and private sectors (e.g. visitation to homebound and isolated). Encourage cooperative buying.
- **Provide safe places:** Faith based organizations can provide safe spaces for those who fear exposure to government. (e.g. undocumented, formerly incarcerated, mentally challenged).
- **Partner with the public and private sectors for problem solving and prevention:** Schools operated by faith institutions from pre-school to seminary levels are open to the general public. These centers can be used to house and provide certifications for new skill sets that are being required (e.g. chemical products, sanitizing/disinfecting for events, people handling, mental health crisis handling)
- **Mitigate the economic crisis:** Faith based organizations can help address the homeless crisis, reduce food insecurity, and handle issues caused by the current recession. We are uniquely equipped to help sustain the positive momentum by working with food banks, markets, produce farms, hospitality industry, etc.
- **Gather data:** Ministry as we have known it is constantly evolving, and in the COVID-19 crisis, change is happening faster than ever. Clearly the breadth and depth of closures on the broader economy has not been evaluated or factored into the recovery equation. A survey of all faith based and religious groups would help to create a more coordinated response in times of need and help guide the equitable distribution of resources across the county. An economic analysis of the many ways that faith based organizations

contribute to and support economic recovery would also be a useful input to policy making.



Economic Resiliency Task Force Faith-Based Organization Sector Workgroup

June 11, 2020

Faith-Based Organization Sector: Community and Economic Impact



Sector Workgroup Membership

- **Lead:** Mrs. Jacquelyn DuPont-Walker, African Methodist Episcopal Church
- Bishop Charles Blake, West Angeles COGIC
- Mr. Scott Chan, DPH Liaison
- Pastor Paul Chappell, Lancaster Baptist
- Rabbi Ken Chasen, Leo Baeck Temple
- Ms. Paula Cracium, Shepherd of the Hills Church
- Father Ed Dover, Beatitudes of Our Lord Catholic Church
- Rabbi Laura Geller, Temple Emanuel of Beverly Hills
- Archbishop José Gomez, Archdiocese of LA
- Reverend Rae Huang, LA Voice
- President Hye-Pim Im, Faith and Community Empowerment Corp.
- Rabbi Yossi Mintz, Chabad of the Beach Cities
- Ms. Dominique Robinson, LA County Department of Children and Family Services
- Reverend K.W. Tullos, Baptist Ministers Conference
- Pastor Chayne Wayne, Antioch Church
- Mr. Roy Weinstein, Micronomics
- President Alex Wu, Hsi Lai Temple

