

Guidance for Emmaus Ministries Communities in a Post-COVID World

As the vaccine for COVID-19 has begun to be available, Emmaus Ministries communities continue to reach out to the International Office for guidance.

As a basis for conversation, we want to inform you that The Upper Room as a whole continues to exercise, and to invite its constituents to exercise, prudence and caution. In 2020 Discipleship Ministries and The Upper Room took bold measures to ensure the health and wellbeing of not only its employees, but also all our partners in ministry by having all staff begin a work-from-home plan and to close our building to visitors and staff. This has since become a permanent work-from-home scenario and reduction in use of our building. There is also a halt on all travel until mid-2021 to assist as well.

At this time, with global infection numbers approaching 100 million and death numbers in the United States alone over 400,000, we want to again advise great caution and discernment in plans to begin offering full 4th Day experiences as we have in the past. As the vaccine becomes more widely available the ability to return to a new normal will be more accessible. But, until that time, we will continue to advise following the Wisconsin Council of Churches release in the midst of the pandemic; *“The way forward will not be a matter of following a timetable, but of faithfully discerning the signs of the times, and responding accordingly.”*

Therefore, as local Emmaus Ministries Communities deliberate, we want to encourage you to:

- **be sensitive to the above-mentioned concerns.**
- prayerfully seek divine guidance on the most appropriate season, location, and conditions in which events will be held.
- to keep **the physical, mental, and spiritual wellbeing of potential team members and participants at the forefront of any decision.** The last thing any community wants is to have an event be forever known as “the COVID Walk (Flight, Encounter, etc.)”
- **Check with your Insurance carrier.** We have not heard of any carriers who are offering a COVID rider on Liability policies. However, we have heard of communities who have hosted events in the last year and have become “super-spreaders” of the virus. These communities have no insurance to fall back on as the carriers are saying these events are not covered due to the community going against Federal, State, and Community mandates.
- **form a Task Force** of both Lay and Clergy who are familiar with the environment in which the community hosts events. This Task Force will look at event schedules with the facility in mind and find where problems could possibly occur (bottlenecks, limit of numbers of participants to maintain safe distances, increase in sanitization policies, etc.) and recommend changes.
- ensure that team members will be in the best possible position to contribute to the development of an environment of grace in which participants will experience God’s amazing love and grace in new and life changing ways.

Where the decision is taken to continue to host events, local Emmaus Ministries Communities will need:

A- To adhere to Federal recommendations for gatherings.

- o Some excellent information is available from the CDC website.
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/index.html>

B- To follow YOUR States recommendations for gatherings – A TN example is provided below.

- <https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/governoroffice-documents/House%20of%20Worship%20Guidance%20FBCI.pdf>

C- To abide to Local recommendations for gatherings – A Nashville example is provided below.

- <https://www.asafenashville.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Fifth-Amended-and-Restated-Order-12-FINAL-SIGNED-30-Dec-20-1.pdf>

D- **Respect the facility's (retreat center, camp ...) policies.**

As God's people, more than ever, we are confident that the things we hope for will become reality. To this end, in our effort to honor God, team members and participants, together with our brothers and sisters in Christ around the world, will continue to seek divine guidance for the work that lies ahead of us.

Much grace and peace going forward.

De Colores!

Resources for spiritual wellness in anxious times - <https://www.upperroom.org/covid-19>