

**COVID-19 Control Plan for the Rockport Baptist Church
Rockport, Massachusetts**

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Number of Workers on Site: 1 full time and 3 part-time

Introduction: The following document lays out the control plan for how the Rockport Baptist Church will reopen during the COVID-19 global pandemic of 2020. This is in response to guidance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the Town of Rockport.¹²³

Theological Rational: The COVID-19 virus has proven to be highly infectious and potentially lethal for the elderly and those with pre-existing conditions.⁴ It is thus out of a desire to love our neighbors and larger community that we will do our part to help stop the spread of the virus.⁵ We joyfully affirm that in his resurrection Jesus has defeated death and evil and that there is no reason to live in fear for those who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ.⁶ The call to gospel living is inherently dangerous and does not prioritize the preservation of personal safety.⁷ Personal sacrifice for the welfare of others is a key Christian ethical imperative.⁸ This imperative is grounded in the life, death, resurrection and call of Jesus Christ.⁹ Loving our neighbor also means that we give serious attention to the long-term negative impacts of the shut down and work towards a way of re-opening and promoting the flourishing of our community. The physical meeting of the church community is critically important for the welfare of the congregation

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

² <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/reopening-massachusetts>

³ <https://www.rockportma.gov/home/news/re-opening-information-rockport-businesses>

⁴ <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-response-reporting>

⁵ Mark 12:30-31

⁶ Romans 8:18-39, I Corinthians 15

⁷ Matthew 16:24-36

⁸ John 15:13

⁹ Phillipians 2:1:11

and her global gospel witness.¹⁰ We will thus strive to return to corporate worship in a judicious and timely manner.

Practical Rational: The Commonwealth of Massachusetts is blessed with some of the greatest research and medical institutions in the world. The state has been a global leader in the fight against COVID-19. Governor Baker and Lt Governor Polito in cooperation with their team have established protocols for opening Houses of Worship effective May 25, 2020.¹¹ The Massachusetts numbers of COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations has continued to decline for several weeks. A re-opening team has been meeting for a number of weeks and believes we can re-open in a phased fashion for corporate worship beginning Sunday, June 14. Based on the preceding rationals, the following plan will be in place:

Social Distancing:

- A) The church employs one full time and three part-time staff members. These members will work staggered hours and in different locations of the building. They will be required to maintain a distance of no less than 6 feet.
- B) During Sunday worship, congregants will be seated in pews designed to maintain 6 square feet of social distance (between individuals or families). Pews have been taped off to make it clear where people can sit to attain this objective. We will limit sanctuary attendance to one-third our maximum capacity. Traffic through the sanctuary will be directed in a one-way pattern. Tape has been placed on the floor to direct social distance.
- C) Signs have been placed around the church requesting social distancing, wearing of masks and frequent hand washing. Extra masks will be provided for those who may need one.
- D) Special stalls have been created on the church platform. These stalls are covered in plastic shower curtains. The pastor and members of the praise band will speak and present music from within these stalls.
- E) At this time there will be no Children's programming or Fellowship Time.

Hygiene Protocols:

- A) Hand sanitizer will be available at all points of entry and exit.
- B) Frequent hand washing of employees and congregants will be ensured.
- C) Regular sanitization of high touch areas will occur.
- D) Passing the offering and communion plates will be suspended. An offering box and online giving will replace the passing of the plate. Individual communion packs will be available for pick-up as congregants entering the building.
- E) Hand shaking and hugging will be discouraged.
- F) At this time no food or beverages will be served on church premises.

Staffing and Operations:

- A) All employees and congregants will be informed of the social distancing and hygiene protocols.
- B) Employees and congregants displaying COVID-19 like symptoms will be asked to stay at home.

¹⁰ Hebrews 10:25

¹¹ <https://www.mass.gov/lists/safety-standards-for-places-of-worship>

- C) Congregants will be informed that the state recommends that persons over the age of 65 and with pre-existing conditions should consider not attending church in the initial phase.
- D) If an employee or congregant becomes ill and or tests positive from COVID-19 they will be asked to notify the church as soon as possible. They will be asked to not return until they are able to provide a note from a medical professional certifying they are no longer COVID-19 positive. If a person is known to have been COVID-19 positive while attending a church service, the church will seek guidance from the Rockport public health nurse.
- E) A registry of attendance will be maintained for tracking purposes.

Cleaning and Disinfecting:

- A) The church has established cleaning protocols that occur on a regular basis.
- B) In the event an employee or congregant has been in the building while positive for COVID-19, a thorough deep cleaning will occur.
- C) Cleaning of common surfaces and door knobs will occur every day that a person is in the building.

Industry Specific Standards:

The guidance found in the Commonwealth’s document “safety standards for places of worship”, have been incorporated in the preceding paragraphs.

Submitted to the Town of Rockport on Monday, June 08, 2020.