

LEXINGTON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

PRESIDENT'S UPDATE ON COVID-19

Vision

To sustain pastors in ministry and education them in ways that will teach them the rhythms of pastoral and congregational life.

Mission

To prepare faithful leaders for the church of Jesus Christ and thus to strengthen the church's participation in God's mission for the world.

Strategic Imperatives

- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Academic Excellence and Relevance
- Sustainability of Pastors in Congregational Ministry
- Financial Stability and Growth
- Continuous Cultivation of a High-Quality Environment to Work, Study, and Grow

We join all people of faith in prayer for all who are affected by Covid-19. We pray for the safety and health of all health care workers, paid and unpaid caregivers, pastors and all who work in the service industry. LTS faculty and staff are holding our students and the entire LTS community in our prayers.

As the conversation turns to “reopening” businesses, schools, parks and churches, I am reminded that the impetus for the quarantine, healthy at home restrictions and shelter in place guidance was the overwhelming concern for the public's health in light of the explicit danger of COVID-19. This danger is still present and the corresponding realities of living and working in the midst of this public health crisis continues. The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person and prevention is the best method to combat the spread of the virus. To combat the spread of the virus, provide a safe working environment for employees while continuing serving students, Lexington Theological Seminary will incorporate into our existing protocols the Healthy at Work practices regarding the use of personal protection equipment, the size of any single gathering of people in the workplace and temperature monitoring.

LTS healthy at work practices will include:

- The Library will remain closed to the public. Enrolled Students, Faculty and Staff will receive priority in filling any request. Where possible, materials available through the DTL will be used for classes.
- Employees should wear a mask in all public spaces.
- Maintain social distancing behaviors; for your convenience space guides will be placed on the carpet of the 3rd floor and in the break room.
- For in house meetings of 3-5 people the 3rd floor conference room is available

- For in house meetings of 5 or more people the 5th floor community space is available or one of the 3rd floor classrooms
- We will take the temperature of all persons entering the work space.
- Anyone feeling sick or ill must shelter in place until examined by a doctor and until all symptoms are gone.
- Sanitizing and cleaning the common work areas every 48 hours.
- Persons testing positive for the coronavirus regardless of symptoms are asked to work from home.
- The Lexington Green Office Building management team is following an enhanced sanitation protocol that supports enhanced sanitation guidelines.
- **STRONGLY** Recommend employees take advantage of COVID-19 testing and vaccines as directed by their health professional

Remote Work Schedules

The country and the seminary continue to navigate the dramatic impacts of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). Today, the economic, social, spiritual, political, and personal impacts of the virus are known in the businesses that have closed their doors permanently and the loss of income for others, in the isolation felt by many and the mental health toll taken on others, in the polarization of basic public healthcare and in the loss of lives, friendships, and connections. Returning to some kind of normal activity, although very much desired, is still full of uncertainty. What we know today about keeping ourselves and others safe and healthy has been enriched but it is also very much a function of the basics – wash your hands, wear a mask, social distance, stay home if sick or ill, clean exposed surfaces often, and, more recently, if available, take the vaccine. In a recent survey of LTS onsite staff, we learned that 99% of the onsite population is vaccinated, employees desire more normal work patterns, that there is a desire to maintain a hybrid work life, and that concern remains about the ongoing mutations of the COVID-19 virus. And, yet because of the surge in Covid-19 positive cases, the emergence of the Delta variant and a sizable population of unvaccinated people, getting back to normal activity is not within reach.

Modified work schedules and work patterns are normative at LTS but in an environment in which electronic communication is the dominant form of communication, it's important to establish new patterns of interaction and communication. We will over communicate on the assumption that it can't hurt to emphasize important information. It is a good practice to return emails, phone calls or texts from colleagues and co-workers on the same day or within 24 hours. Try to think of this communication as you would if you were in the physical space and could walk down the hall and knock on someone's door. Of course, scheduling meetings and conferences calls remains an appropriate way to deal with issues that require substantive coordination and planning. Employees are asked to coordinate with the Dean, VP of Advancement or CFO to select 2 days for onsite activity and professional connections. In addition, teams that do not have established check-in practices should schedule a weekly or bi-weekly meeting to facilitate our mutual work. These measures may be familiar to you as healthy at work practices and workplace protocols, but they bear repeating in the spirit of over communicating

January Intensives

The dean and faculty in consultation with the president have decided to hold 2022 January Intensives online. This decision was made in light of the surge in Covid-19 cases across the country, in Kentucky and out of deep concern for faculty, staff and students. The letter from the Dean to students will read as follows:

We know that so many of you want to come to campus. We had been planning since last June to bring you on campus and have been purchasing things like air filters to ensure your safety. However, in light of the surge spurred by the Delta variant and the recent news of a new variant on the horizon, the faculty and administrative staff met on September 9, 2021 and decided that there are still too many risks. There are risks in air travel. There are risks in exposing some of you who care for at-risk or immunocompromised loved ones who cannot be vaccinated. The physical capacity of our classrooms must limit how many of you can come. Frankly, the reasons for coming—worshipping together, dining together, visiting sites, and so forth—are severely hampered since those options are not necessarily available in Kentucky at this time.

Given these reasons, we have chosen to hold January Intensives fully online. We pray and ask that you join us in prayer that our country and the world will eventually see a future in which we can once again gather as a community. In January, I will communicate with you regarding events for June of 2022. I ask for your patience and forbearance. I realize that this brings much sadness and grief. As faculty and staff, we hold each of you in our prayers as you do the hard work of studying, pastoring, caring for families, friends, and communities.

Notification of this decision will go to students and employees on Monday, September 13, 2021 through an email notice, and will be posted on the website no later than Tuesday, September 14, 2021.

Key Points/Guiding Principles for Reentry

When the seminary is able to plan for reentry of the student body, the following Key Points/Guiding Principles will help in our decision-making.

The CDC website offers the following protocols for institutions of higher education (IHE). The more a person interacts with others and the longer that interaction lasts, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spread in the community. Risk is also affected by factors such as background rates of infection in the community and individuals' compliance with mitigation strategies, such as use of masking, social distancing, and hand hygiene. IHEs should communicate their selected level of risk so people can make more informed decisions about attendance, especially those with disabilities and people who are at [higher risk of severe illness](#) from COVID. The risk of COVID-19 spread increases in IHE non-residential (i.e., off-campus housing) and residential (i.e., on-campus housing) settings with the level of COVID activity in the community and as follows:

IHE General Settings

Lowest Risk

- Faculty and students engage in virtual-only learning options, activities, and events.

Some Risk

- Students, faculty, and staff follow all steps to [protect themselves and others](#) at all times, including proper use of face masks, social distancing, and hand hygiene.
- Hybrid learning model: Students participate in virtual learning, and in-person learning is limited to courses and laboratory instruction that cannot be delivered remotely.
- Students, faculty, and staff participate in small, in-person classes, activities, and events that allow individuals to remain spaced at least 6 feet apart (e.g., lecture room with individual seating spaced 6 feet apart).
- Students avoid out-of-class social gatherings and events and communications, and policies discourage these activities.
- Apply and support strict adherence to cohorting, alternating schedules, and staggered schedules in residence halls, dining areas, and recreational areas on campus to create small groups of students and minimize their contact with others (e.g., small cohorts of freshmen who live and learn together).
- Students, faculty, and staff do not share objects (e.g., laboratory, art, or recreational equipment and supplies).
- Regularly scheduled (e.g., at least daily or between use) [cleaning and disinfection](#) of frequently touched areas occur as planned (i.e., on-time and consistently).

Medium Risk

- Students, faculty, and staff follow all steps to [protect themselves and others](#) such as proper use of face masks, social distancing, and hand hygiene.
- Hybrid learning model: Students participate in a mix of virtual learning and in-person learning for all courses (in-person learning is not limited to specific courses).
- Students, faculty, and staff participate in larger in-person classes, activities, and events that allow people to remain spaced at least 6 feet apart (e.g., classroom with marked seating or seating removed to encourage sitting 6 feet apart).
- Apply cohorting, alternating schedules, and staggered schedules with some exceptions in residence halls, dining areas, and recreational areas on campus.
- Students, faculty, and staff participate in limited, small out-of-class social gatherings and events.
- Students, faculty, and staff dine outside whenever possible, or in well-ventilated rooms with social distancing applied.
- Students and faculty share objects minimally (e.g., sharing of objects is limited to one person at a time for laboratory, art, or recreational equipment and supplies that cannot be purchased or assigned individually and that are wiped down with disinfectant, as possible, between uses).

- Regularly scheduled [cleaning and disinfection](#) of frequently touched areas occur as planned with few exceptions.

Higher Risk

- Students, faculty, and staff follow some steps to [protect themselves and others](#) at all times such as proper use of face masks, social distancing, and hand hygiene.
- Students and faculty engage in in-person only learning, activities, and events.
- Students, faculty, and staff attend several small out-of-class social gatherings and events.
- Students, faculty, and staff dine in indoor dining rooms while maintaining social distancing.
- Students and faculty share some objects (e.g., sharing of objects is limited to one group of students at a time for laboratory, art, or recreational equipment and supplies that cannot be purchased or assigned individually and that are wiped down with disinfectant, as possible, between uses).
- Irregularly scheduled [cleaning and disinfection](#) of frequently touched areas.

Highest Risk

- Use of public buses, campus buses/shuttles or other high-occupancy enclosed vehicles with limited ventilation and/or that require students, faculty, or staff to have sustained close contact with others. CDC's [Protect Yourself When Using Transportation](#) provides tips for minimizing your risk when using public transportation.
- Students, faculty, and staff do not/are not required to follow steps such as proper use of face masks, social distancing, hand hygiene to [protect themselves and others](#).
- Students and faculty regularly engage in in-person learning, activities, and events.
- Students, faculty, and staff attend large out-of-class social gatherings and events.
- Students and faculty freely share objects.
- Students, faculty, and staff dine in indoor dining rooms without social distancing.
- Irregularly scheduled [cleaning and disinfection](#) of frequently touched areas.

COVID-19 is thought to spread mainly by respiratory droplets released when people talk, cough, or sneeze. It is thought that the virus may spread to hands from a contaminated surface and then to the nose or mouth, causing infection. Therefore, personal prevention practices (such as hand washing, staying home when sick) and environmental prevention practices (such as cleaning and disinfection) are important principles. Fortunately, there are a number of actions IHE administrators can take to help lower the risk of COVID-19 exposure and spread.

The following recommendations apply to non-healthcare settings.

Fully vaccinated people can:

- Resume activities without wearing masks or physically distancing, except where required by federal, state, local, tribal or territorial laws, rules, and regulations, including local business and workplace guidance.

- Resume domestic travel and refrain from testing before or after travel or self-quarantine after travel.
- Refrain from testing before leaving the United States for international travel (unless required by the destination) and refrain from self-quarantine after arriving back in the United States.
- Refrain from testing following a known exposure, if asymptomatic, with some exceptions for specific settings.
- Refrain from quarantine following a known exposure if asymptomatic.
- Refrain from routine screening testing if feasible.

For now, fully vaccinated people should continue to:

- Get tested if experiencing [COVID-19 symptoms](#).
- Follow CDC and health department travel requirements and recommendations.
- All these actions are a measure of our progress. They are all part of our history now, a history I pray we as people of faith and country can reckon with in honesty.
- We are monitoring all updates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services for guidance on the outbreak nationwide. For the most up-to-date information we recommend visiting the websites for the [CDC COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions](#), [Disciples News Service](#) and [Disciples and COVID-19](#). We encourage everyone to exercise caution, ask questions and seek information from knowledgeable sources.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

With hope,

**Charisse L. Gillett
President**

Updated September 13, 2021