



APOSTOLIC ASSEMBLY OF THE FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS

# GUIDELINES FOR REOPENING OUR CHURCHES



## APOSTOLIC ASSEMBLY OF THE FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS

Dear Brothers,  
Praise the Lord.

We thank God that His powerful hand and His divine protection are on the Apostolic Assembly. To this day, we are witnessing how the Lord has been guiding us in the midst of so many confused voices and significant political polarization.

God's word says:

- *Proverbs 11:14 Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.*
- *Proverbs 15:22 Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established.*
- *Proverbs 24: 6 For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war: and in multitude of counsellors there is safety.*

Clearly, direction, safety and victory are the outcome when unity is present among a multitude of counselors. All the decisions that are being taken in this time of crisis are being made by the General Board of Directors and the Episcopal Body, jointly. We are thankful that God has confirmed his Word, and that the Apostolic Assembly, through its leadership, in the midst of the corona virus pandemic, is confronting all that is occurring and is overcoming.

At the May 19<sup>th</sup> Episcopal Meeting, the Bishops decided that the District Bishops along with the District Boards and Pastors will decide "when" to return to our temples, and the International Board of Directors would decide "how" our temples in the United States would reopen. Immediately after that Episcopal Meeting, we named the commission that was going to work on the "how", that is, on the practical guidelines to follow. The commission was composed of Bishops: Felipe A. Salazar, Felipe Lugo, Andy Provencio and Jose G. Zuniga. Today, these guidelines were presented at an Episcopal Meeting. After several hours of discussion, the guidelines were approved by the Bishops as the official guidelines that will direct all Pastors in the reopening of their local churches.

These Practical Guidelines have taken many hours of work and study. We hope that all our churches in the Apostolic Assembly will apply them, and that the return to our temples will be orderly and peaceful. We have done this because we consider the physical and spiritual well-being of our brothers a priority.

May God bless you and keep you,



Bishop, J. Fortino

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Protecting the health of our church and community.

The Apostolic Assembly understands the great value of human life in the eyes of God. We believe that the value of every human being consists in the fact that, distinct from the rest of creation, man alone was created in God's image. As believers we also believe that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit and that as such we are entrusted with its well-being. In light of these truths, we are committed to protecting the health of our church members and of our communities. Protecting human life is an important value of our church.

### B. Following Federal, State and Local directives and guidelines.

The General Board is asking that every church of the Apostolic Assembly respect and strictly follow all Federal, State and Local directives regarding reopening the churches. In Chapter 25 of our 2019 Constitution, Doctrinal Point Number 15, states in part that, ". . . *all Christians must obey civil authorities and the laws and ordinances issued by these authorities, unless these laws contradict religious principles or force Christians to act against their conscience.*" (Romans 13:1-7). The Constitution mandates that we follow the laws and ordinances of our civil authorities.

It is important to note that the requirements mandated by the state and local authorities may vary in different jurisdictions and that some of the standards set forth in this document may not apply in every District or church. When faced with conflicting rules from different government authorities, we are asking you to lean toward the safer or more conservative rules. Ultimately, we are asking that the Pastors of our Church take every necessary measure to guarantee the safety of its membership and visitors.

Furthermore, in Chapter 25, Doctrinal Point 12, regarding Divine Healing, the 2019 Constitution states the following: "*We recommend that all members and ministers of our Church abstain from improper criticisms of medical science, whose advancements cannot be denied and originate in the ability that God has given men to discover the secrets of the functioning of the human organism. We also advise against opposing government campaigns for hygiene, vaccination, and cleanliness; instead, we advise that they cooperate in these campaigns decidedly wherever possible.*"

### C. Planning a successful return

The Apostolic Assembly is asking the ministry and core leadership of the local churches to meet in order to determine the best course of action to assure the well-being of their congregants. The local churches should only be reopened when everything is in place for a safe return.

### **D. Mitigating the legal risk of the Apostolic Assembly, the Episcopal Body and it's Pastors.**

As members of the Apostolic Assembly, we belong to a greater body of believers, and as such, we are not only responsible for protecting the interests of our local assemblies but also those of our corporation. The General Board and Bishops are asking that all Pastors in our Church follow the guidelines established by the General Board and Bishops for reopening our congregations. Pastors who follow the guidelines outlined in this document are essentially protecting themselves and our Church from the spread of the virus. Those who reopen their churches without following the guidelines of their health officials and of the Apostolic Assembly are putting themselves and our corporation at legal risk. No congregation of the Apostolic Assembly should defy any Federal, State or Local directives or take any action that will put the Apostolic Assembly at legal risk.

### **E. Accountability**

The General Board is establishing this system of accountability to ensure that the dictates of our governmental authorities and of this document are followed.

- 1) The General Board, through the District mentors, will supervise the Bishops to make sure that the district is following the guidelines established in this document. Within 2 weeks, the District Bishops shall submit a written report to their mentor on the compliance of the local churches in their District. Within 2 days, the Mentor will then submit the completed report to the General Secretary.
- 2) The District Bishops will oversee the return of the congregations to their sanctuaries. The bishops will ensure that pastors follow the guidelines provided in this document.
- 3) Each Pastor will present, in writing, their plan to return to their buildings in accordance with the guidelines of their local governments and will accept, in writing, the procedures provided in these guidelines.
- 4) Pastors will not pressure or require any of their congregants to return to their sanctuaries until all restrictions have been completely removed by the governmental authorities.

### **F. Liability Insurance**

The Pastor must be certain that the local church's liability insurance is up to date and that the insurance fully covers the local church and the Apostolic Assembly prior to reentry into the temple.

## II. INFORMING THE CONGREGATION

The congregants should be informed of the new standards that will be in place before they return to the sanctuary. Prior to returning to in-person services a church may opt to place a disclaimer on their social media and on church facilities that cautions the congregant of the risk associated with gathering while social restrictions are still in place.

The message could read as follows:

*[Insert name of the church here] is taking the necessary precautions to minimize any health risks to its congregants. Among other things, our church will be cleaning and sanitizing the sanctuary and strictly observing social distancing norms. However, we cannot completely eliminate the risk of exposure. By participating in our activities, the congregant is assuming the risk that may result in exposure to communicable diseases.*

Signs must be placed in key areas informing arriving congregants of the new standards.

When congregants have entered the building, they should be encouraged to observe all basic health and sanitary practices during the time they are on the church premises.

## III. THE CHURCH PROPERTY

### **The Property**

- 1) The entire church should undergo a deep cleaning before and after each service. Thought should be given to where germs will be transferred. Pews, bathrooms, doorknobs, light switches, computers, audio-visual equipment and microphones should be sanitized often.
- 2) The water fountains on the church property should be closed and marked as such when congregants are present. People who want to drink water during service should bring their own water to service. When leaving the sanctuary, they should take their bottle with them.
- 3) The church carpets should be cleaned regularly.

### **Disinfecting the Sanctuary**

The following sanitation guidelines should be followed during in-person church services.

- 1) The church must provide training for its ushers on their role in the procedures the church is implementing to safeguard the congregants.

## APOSTOLIC ASSEMBLY OF THE FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS

- 2) The church should provide hand sanitizer at locations of the church that people frequent. Hand sanitizer should also be provided to church members as they enter and exit the building.
- 3) The church should have face masks on hand in case a congregant does not bring one.
- 4) The church may opt for using a “no contact” thermometer at the entrance of the sanctuary to make sure everyone entering the sanctuary is in good health. If a person has a fever, they should not be allowed to enter the building. There may be cases in which a person displays a higher temperature if he or she was running or engaged in brisk activity. If so, allow that person to rest and retake their temperature.
- 5) All common areas of ministry must be wiped down before another person approaches the common area, particularly the pulpit, microphones, and computer equipment.

### **The Restrooms**

The following sanitation guidelines should be followed when using the church’s restrooms.

- 1) Usage of restrooms should be strictly controlled by the ushers.
- 2) The floor at the entrance of the restrooms must be marked to ensure keeping social distances.
- 3) Small children must be accompanied by a parent.
- 4) Care should be taken to make sure that the number of people using the restroom at the same time conforms to the required social distances rules of the jurisdiction.
- 5) Hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes should be provided to all those entering the restrooms. The disinfecting wipes will be for wiping the seat of the commode before using the services.
- 6) Visible signs to remind everyone of the importance of hygienic practices should be placed in the restrooms and other strategic spaces.
- 7) All persons exiting the restrooms must wash their hands before exiting.
- 8) The ushers will provide hand sanitizer to every person as they exit the restroom.
- 9) Restrooms must be kept clean at all times.

## IV. IN-PERSON SERVICES

In-Person services will only be held when the corresponding authorities officially declare that it is safe to do so. We understand that these guidelines may vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. The following are things to consider when reopening the sanctuary

### **A. Multiple Services**

Depending on the restrictions placed on the number of people allowed at church gatherings, it may become necessary to celebrate multiple services in order to accommodate the whole congregation. It may also become necessary to have people sign up for the different services the church will be offering while always saving spaces for unexpected visitors.

### **B. Virtual and physical meetings**

After the reopening of church services, and during the transition back to normal congregational services, the Pastor may have to celebrate both in-person services as well as transmit or livestream their services on social media. The in-person services would be for the limited number of members that can physically attend services and the transmissions would be for those that cannot attend the in-person service. It is important to consider that some church members may not feel safe returning to the in-person services until all safety concerns have been resolved and all social restrictions have been lifted by the health authorities. Church members should not be pressured to return to the sanctuary until it is completely safe to do so.

### **C. Scheduling of services**

If the Pastor opts for celebrating multiple services, it is recommended that he shorten the length of the service schedule. The Pastor and church leadership will have to give sufficient time between services to sanitize the sanctuary before the next congregants arrive.

### **D. Social distancing and masks**

When celebrating in-person services, all social distancing guidelines must be strictly observed. The sanctuary must be prepared beforehand to only accommodate the number of people that the local health authorities say would be safe to put in the building. The following should be considered:

- 1) Social interactions amongst church members, while on the church premises, must be limited to the social distancing norms established by the health authorities. Until all restrictions are removed by the health authorities, greeting each other must not involve any physical contact.

## APOSTOLIC ASSEMBLY OF THE FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS

- 2) The windows and doors of the sanctuary should remain open during service times to allow fresh air to circulate and ensure that congregants do not have to touch the doorknobs or handles.
- 3) The chairs must be kept six feet in all directions from one another, or persons must be seated at the same distance if the sanctuary has pews.
- 4) When allowed by the jurisdiction, people living in the same household may sit together.
- 5) All congregants must wear face masks the entire time they are on the church premises. As for children are concerned, the instructions of their jurisdiction must be followed.
- 6) Those ministering on the platform (ministers, musicians, and praise singers) must observe all social distancing norms and health guidelines. They may remove their mask, if it is safe to do so, only while they are ministering, but if the face mask is removed, the nearest audience members must be ten feet away.
- 7) The offering must be collected taking into account social distances.

### **E. Senior Citizens' Service**

It is recommended that senior citizens (persons 65 years old or older) including Pastors and individuals with respiratory and chronic illnesses remain home. A special service exclusively for senior citizens may be scheduled to protect their well-being.

### **F. Food**

Food or any type of sale should not be provided on church premises while government restrictions are in place.

## **V. PARKING LOT SERVICES**

### **A. Parking lot rules**

- 1) The church must provide trained ushers that will control all traffic and movement during the Parking lot services.
- 2) The instructions of the ushers must be strictly followed by all those in attendance from the time of arrival to the time of departure.
- 3) Everyone who attends a Parking Lot Service must remain in their vehicles at all times. It is important to keep in mind that the longer the service time, the more likely it will be that attendees may exit their cars.

## APOSTOLIC ASSEMBLY OF THE FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS

- 4) No one should be allowed to pass articles between vehicles.
- 5) Depending on the rules in your jurisdiction, a portable restroom or easy access to a restroom may be necessary, if the service takes place in a rented or borrowed parking lot. Ushers must be on hand to direct traffic and ensure that social distancing rules are followed (see Section VI).

### **B. Duration of Services**

1. Service times must be kept within the time stipulated by local authorities.
2. The volume of the sound must be kept within reasonable levels.
3. Online services should still be available for members who choose to stay home during these services.

### **C. Use of church facilities**

1. The church building will be closed to all attendees.
2. The use of rest rooms must be strictly controlled by the church ushers.

## **VI. CHILDREN'S MINISTRY**

Churches may consider having all family members, including their children, sit together in church services. Children, in a children's ministry setting, are not very likely to keep social distancing guidelines, so these are discouraged until rules are further relaxed by local authorities.

## **VII. THE SACRAMENTS AND MINISTRY TO THE SAINTS**

### **A. Water Baptisms**

Baptism is a sacrament. The essential elements of the baptismal rite are complete immersion in water and the invocation of the name of Jesus Christ. All other practices surrounding the sacrament of baptism are not considered essential. Among the nonessential components, are the songs we sing, welcoming and congratulating the new believer, and others. In order to follow the guidelines, set by the authorities, we may have to limit the number of people that attend the baptism and the order of the service that is customary. This does not make the baptism any less meaningful, but still emphasizes the importance of this sacrament.

## APOSTOLIC ASSEMBLY OF THE FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS

- 1) Baptisms should be scheduled. The number of people allowed to physically witness the baptism should be limited to those allowed by governmental authorities in any gathering. The baptisms can be simultaneously transmitted live via social media so anyone who wants to witness the baptism may do so.
- 2) During the baptism, social distancing standards must be followed. Spaces should be marked in the sanctuary indicating the places where the witnesses can stand to view the baptism.
- 3) Sufficient time should be allowed between baptisms so that the different groups witnessing the baptisms do not intermingle as they enter and exit the building.
- 4) When necessary, and if possible, baptisms may be held outdoors at a lake or river.
- 5) The baptistry should be sanitized. If the person being baptized has any health issues or is of advanced age, the baptism should be exclusive to that person. When there is more than one baptism, they can be scheduled on different days of the week to allow for cleaning the baptistry between baptisms, or multiple baptismal bins may be used.
- 6) The minister baptizing should be in good health. If there are multiple baptisms in one day, only one minister should perform the baptisms.
- 7) We recommend that the minister administering the baptism wear a mask.
- 8) The water in the baptistry should have sufficient chlorine to disinfect it.

### **B. Laying on of hands / Praying for the sick**

A time should be allotted for praying for the sick. The ministry of laying on of hands is an important practice of the church. During this health crisis, when the imposition of hands is practiced, the minister, if required to do so by health authorities, must wear a face mask and may opt to have his hands sanitized before anointing the person with oil and laying his hands on the person needing prayer. If he is praying for other church members in the same service, he should repeat the practice of sanitizing his hands before laying hands on the succeeding persons. Only assigned ministers will pray for those requesting prayer.

### **C. Praying for the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.**

Prayer should be made for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit during church services. Praying for the baptism of the Holy Spirit does not have a specific biblical order that must be followed. The Bible states that the Holy Spirit was given in two primary ways. One, it came suddenly upon believers (Acts 2:1-4; 10:44-45), and two, it was given when the Apostles laid their hands on the seekers (Acts 8:17-18; 9:17; 19:6).

## APOSTOLIC ASSEMBLY OF THE FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS

Although the normal practice of the Church has been to have believers pray with those who are seeking the baptism of the Holy Spirit, during this health crisis, we will be limiting prayer for receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit to the sovereign acts of the Holy Spirit and to the laying on of hands by the Ministry.

### **D. Altar Calls**

Prayer can be done in many forms. Prayer is effective, not because of the form or manner in which it is done, but because prayer is offered in faith, with Jesus, the giver, as the sole focus. Church members should be encouraged to pray at their seats. Altar calls may not be possible depending on the restrictions limiting the distance between attendees at church services. Family members that live in the same household may pray for one another and appointed ministers may move among the membership that request personal prayer. But there should be no praying for one another that violates distancing norms.

## **VIII. CELL GROUPS**

### **A. Physical Cell Groups**

In-person small groups will only be allowed when social distancing guidelines can be strictly observed.

### **B. Household Cell Groups**

Household cell groups are groups that are limited to only members living within a house and immediate family members. Household cell groups are an option when the meeting place of the group does not allow for the health restrictions to be strictly observed.

### **C. Virtual Cell Groups**

Virtual cell groups are groups that meet via internet platforms like Zoom and others. These meetings eliminate the possibility of any physical contact while providing a means for the cell groups to meet safely. These cell groups can meet without any danger to the attendees.

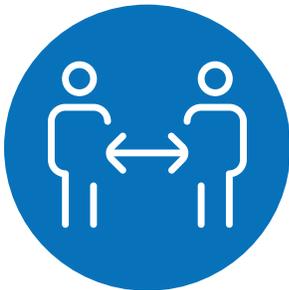
# CORONAVIRUS PREVENTION



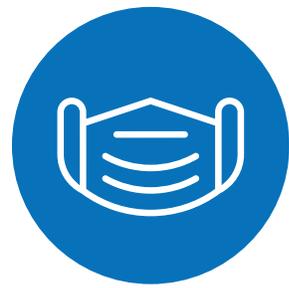
**DAILY DISINFECTED  
AREA**



**USE HAND  
SANITIZER**



**KEEP SAFE  
DISTANCE**



**WEAR MASK**



**WASH YOUR  
HANDS FREQUENTLY**



**APOSTOLIC ASSEMBLY OF THE FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS**

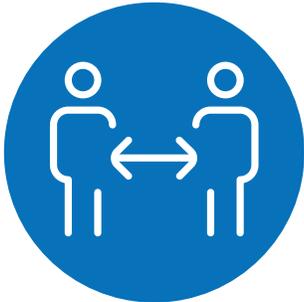
# PREVENCIÓN CONTRA EL CORONAVIRUS



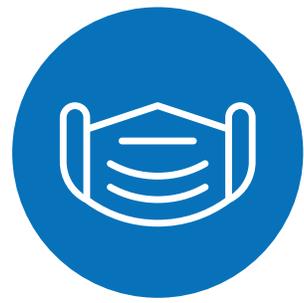
**ESPACIO  
DESINFECTADO CADA  
DÍA**



**UTILICE EL GEL  
DESINFECTANTE**



**RESPETE LA  
DISTANCIA DE  
SEGURIDAD**



**UTILICE MASCARILLA**



**LÁVESE LAS  
MANOS A MENUDO**



**APOSTOLIC ASSEMBLY OF THE FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS**

**CORONAVIRUS PREVENTION**  
**PREVENCIÓN CONTRA**  
**EL CORONAVIRUS**



**DAILY DISINFECTED AREA**

**ESPACIO DESINFECTADO**  
**CADA DÍA**



**APOSTOLIC ASSEMBLY OF THE FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS**

# **CORONAVIRUS PREVENTION**

## **PREVENCIÓN CONTRA EL CORONAVIRUS**



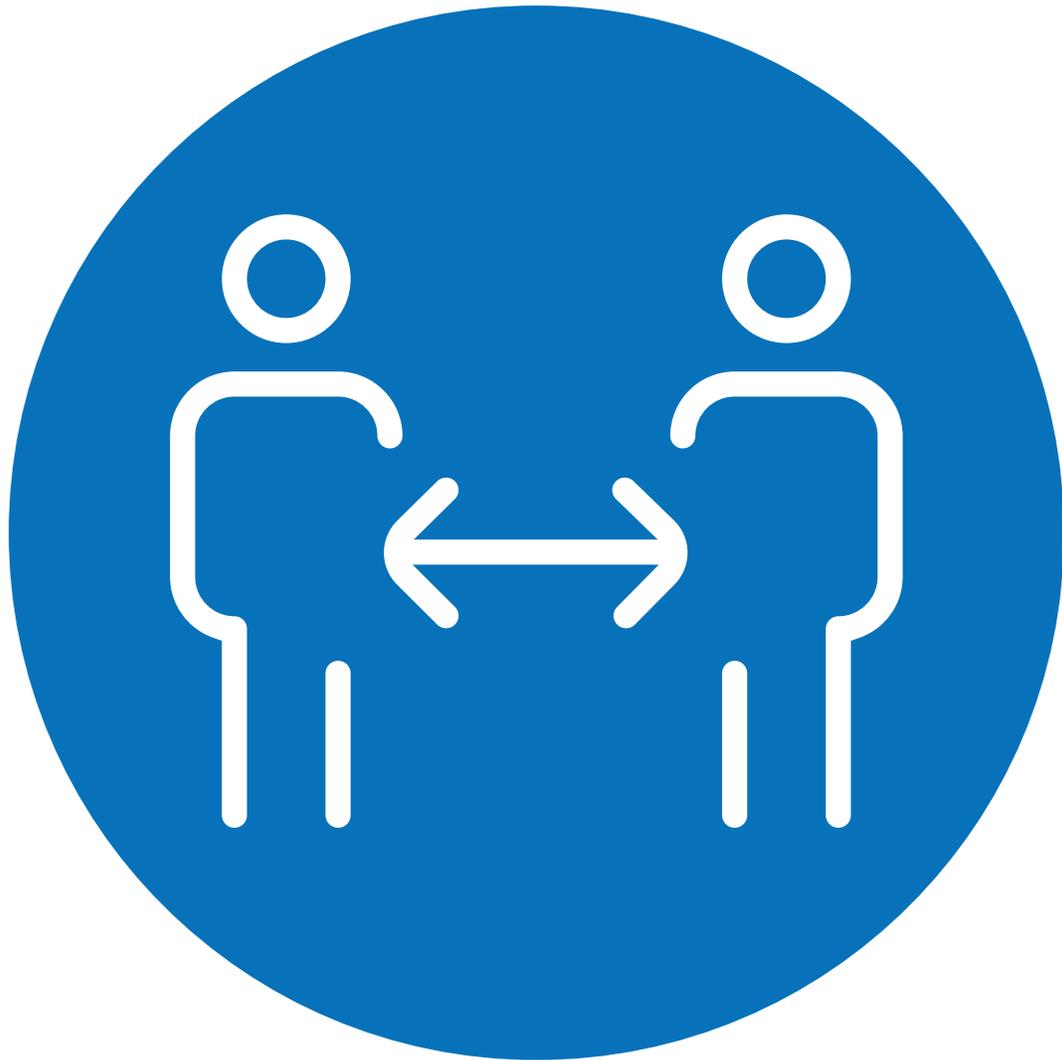
**USE HAND SANITIZER**

**UTILICE EL GEL  
DESINFECTANTE**



**APOSTOLIC ASSEMBLY OF THE FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS**

**CORONAVIRUS PREVENTION**  
**PREVENCIÓN CONTRA**  
**EL CORONAVIRUS**



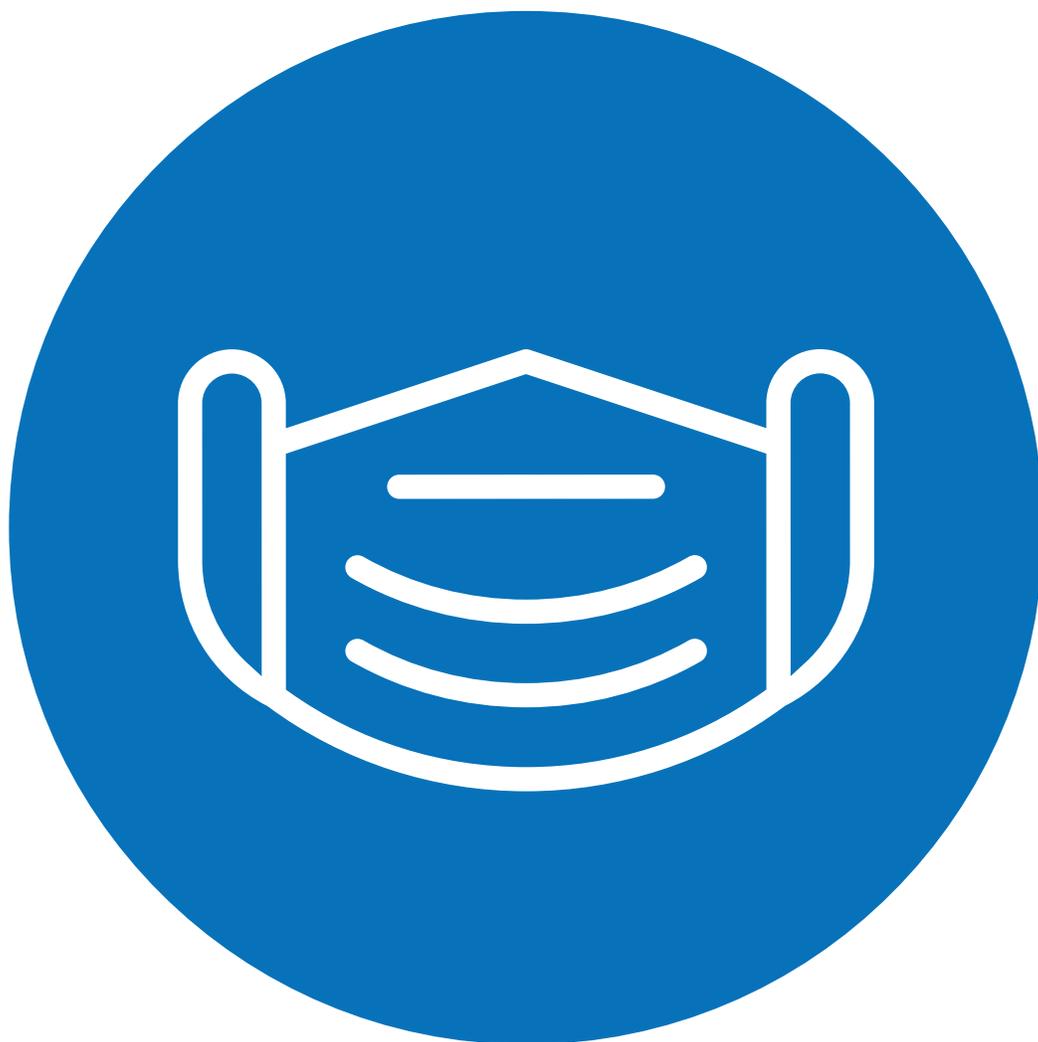
**KEEP SAFE DISTANCE**

**RESPETE LA DISTANCIA**  
**DE SEGURIDAD**



**APOSTOLIC ASSEMBLY OF THE FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS**

**CORONAVIRUS PREVENTION**  
**PREVENCIÓN CONTRA**  
**EL CORONAVIRUS**



**WEAR MASK**

**UTILICE MASCARILLA**



**APOSTOLIC ASSEMBLY OF THE FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS**

# **CORONAVIRUS PREVENTION**

## **PREVENCIÓN CONTRA EL CORONAVIRUS**



**WASH YOUR  
HANDS FREQUENTLY**

**LÁVESE LAS MANOS A MENUDO**



**APOSTOLIC ASSEMBLY OF THE FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS**

