

**SC Church of God Mandate for Covid-19
Statement from our Administrative Bishop**



In times of crisis and turmoil, the Church of God in South Carolina has always come together as a body of believers and found ways to survive. With that in mind, I want to address the question, “*Should we the Church of God have church services in our sanctuary for the next two weeks?*” In the church “world,” there is probably no question that is asked more often than that single question. And even more so as we see Easter on the horizon. While there is no easy answer, The White House advised all Americans to avoid groups of more than 10 and urged older people to stay at home in order to fight a spreading coronavirus outbreak.

So, what about the immediate days ahead? The Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends that groups no larger than 10 people should meet together. Then in President Trump’s press conference on March 16, he suggested that for the next 15 days no group larger than 10 people should meet and then shortly thereafter lowered the number to three people. Just a few days ago he extended those guidelines to April 30. Meanwhile, Governor Henry McMaster has extended his timeline of recommendations to April 12th and lowered the number of people gathering to three (3) people. So where does that leave churches? *When can we anticipate gathering in our sanctuary of worship again?* That will be determined by how quick the coronavirus is contained.

Please keep in mind that while we may have a right to practice religious beliefs, we also have a right and a responsibility to be good neighbors to those in our community. Under no circumstances, would we want an outbreak of the coronavirus or any other illness to be spread from within the walls of our congregation to others.

Even in times when we are under recommendations by governmental officials not to meet together in larger crowds or for our children to attend the public schools, it still remains important for the church body to know that we are a group of connected believers. At this time maintaining that connection will take more effort. It may differ from church to church and from one group to another within the same church. However, we must remain the body of Christ - joined together with the same purpose and with a commitment to see the Great Commission fulfilled and completed within our community, our state, our nation, and our world.

Hebrews 10:25 encourages us not to forsake “the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much more as you see the Day approaching.” That Day is certainly approaching. And while we may not be able to have our “normal” services over the next couple of weeks, we must find every way possible to keep the body of Christ together and looking for our Savior’s soon return.

As a final personal note, be assured that as we move through the next several days, no one is considered unfaithful or disloyal to the Lord's work as worship services are rearranged and even canceled. We must and will get through this crisis and when we do, it will be said, "the Church of God was a great witness to the World."

It is with a heavy heart that as the State Administrative Bishop for the South Carolina Church of God, the **mandate** that we have followed for the last two weeks that we not worship in our sanctuaries will be extended for the next two Sundays and will be re-evaluated on April 13th.

Easter this year will be unique and different, but I believe that we will reach more people with the gospel, and it could be one of our greatest days.

I am praying that on Pentecost Sunday we will see our churches reap a fruitful harvest from this pandemic.

Steps that we are taking during this Pandemic:

1. We have been having various types of meetings with Dr. Tim Hill and the Executive Committee, with other State Overseers, with the South Carolina State Council members and our State Directors to create the best plan and strategy for South Carolina.
2. We are trying to provide pastors with information and resources that are coming from our Governor and the International Offices.
3. We have developed a COVID-19 Information Page on our website:
sccog.com/covid19
4. We have reached out to our District Overseers and had a zoom meeting with them. They were encouraged to reach out to all the Pastors on their district to see if they needed anything.
5. We are calling our retired ministers and our widows to check on them.
6. Our office is not scheduling appointments or meetings at the Office during this Pandemic. Our staff is working limited hours at the office and remotely from home and is available to assist you at any time.
7. We will continue to share information about cancellations or postponements as it is decided.
8. We are soliciting your prayers for God to heal our land of this pandemic, for anointing on our leaders, and for wisdom and knowledge for such a time as this.

"We Exist to Assist"