



Dear Louisiana Leaders,

Paul's normal greeting of Grace and Peace seems to bear as much significance today as ever. In these past few weeks of escalating concerns related to COVID-19, we need to experience the Grace and Peace of God in our lives and also be a conduit of that same Grace and Peace to a culture that is struggling amidst this pandemic.

In addressing all of our concerns to COVID-19, We continue to monitor the situation and are communicating with our National Office in Springfield and the local and state authorities on their recommendations. Our encouragement to you continues to be: practice disciplined cleanliness (wash your hands), patience with others in their concerns, mindful of your personal space in a crowd (cover your cough and sneeze with your arm), and self-aware of your own physical condition (Don't go out if you are sick). Above all, be prayerful for those affected and for a soon remedy to this virus. Be hopeful and encouraging to others as you serve. This is a great time for our faith in Jesus to set us apart from the chaotic crowd.

Our response must be a balance of faith, care, patience, and proper health care practices. I have read so many of your wonderful posts to your people and I am praying for you as you make decisions concerning your churches and ministries. On behalf of our Network Executive Presbytery, we are here to serve you to offer counsel to you as we all walk together down this unique path.

Currently, as of Friday morning, March 13, (and subject to change pending new announcements from state and federal officials), there have not been any mandatory decisions passed on church closings. As you know, other States with a greater level of COVID-19 infections have ruled for closings in public gatherings and churches in varying degrees.

I encourage you to watch a response from our General Superintendent Doug Clay on our La Network Facebook Page, or you can also view it on the Assemblies of God USA page. It has valuable legal, technical, and spiritual perspectives from Doug Clay, Attorney Rich Hammar, and Mark Forrester at the AG National Office. We will continue to post pertinent information as it becomes available.

Here at the office, we have fielded many calls with basically the same question, "What should our church do?". Here are a few extra thoughts as we move forward:

- * Discourage the elderly and individuals whose immune systems might be compromised or those who are feeling ill, from attending church or other public gatherings; at the same time, think of ways to minister on an individual basis, possibly by phone or internet as needed, so they remain connected and spiritually encouraged

- * Encourage all members to exercise greater caution than normal in terms of proximity and hygiene at all times, including while on the church grounds; remind them of the steps your church is taking to keep your facilities, nursery, restrooms, etc. as clean as possible, in accordance with recommended guidelines

- * Avoid practices such as holding hands, passing the communion tray or offering bucket, etc., which increase the opportunity for spreading germs



* Advise everyone of online viewing options, such as Facebook Live, where those desiring to plug-in from a distance may do so with ease.

*Provide hand sanitizer, wipes, etc., for everyone in the church facility and encourage them to exercise extreme care with those whom they know to be at risk

*We do not recommend that any Louisiana AG churches or ministries hold gatherings in defiance of orders by government officials; to do otherwise would heighten legal, insurance, and other risks (currently, no such orders exist).

* Already, numerous congregations are creatively inventing ways their people can be a blessing to the community during this uniquely challenging season. Have your leaders discussed what your group of believers might be able to do in your area to show the love of Christ? Societal challenges are the perfect opportunity for the people of Jesus to impact their culture with radical love, peace, wisdom, and compassion.

* Reach out to your Area Presbyter or Regional Executive Presbyter or our Network Office at any time if you have any questions. We all are here to pray and offer any assistance we can. Work as a team to prepare in advance so the twists and turns ahead will be a little easier to navigate.

* If you are feeling overwhelmed you can look on the back of your credentials card and use the AG Help Line number listed. These trained counselors are waiting to offer encouragement to you, your spouse, and your children.

Finally, stay tuned for further updates from local and national officials as well as our network Facebook page. I have included several links that are excellent sources of information from national agencies. I included several government links and attachments from one of our local churches that might give you ideas on how to best serve your people. Thank you for leading well, helping one another, and serving your cities and communities!

#dogreatthings
Scott Holmes
Superintendent

<http://ldh.la.gov/Coronavirus/>
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/checklist.html>