



## Presbytery of Coastal Carolina

*One Presbytery ~ Three Covenant Communities*

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July 19, 2020

Siblings in Faith,

Prayers that this letter finds you healthy and in cool facilities!

The Executive Board of the Mission Cabinet for the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina continues to monitor the progression of the pandemic in North Carolina – particularly the counties that incorporate our jurisdiction. The Board has decided that there has not been significant improvement to recommend different engagement for August.

- **The Executive Board has decided that all presbytery meetings, events, and gatherings scheduled for August shall be virtual.**
- **The Executive Board recommends that indoor congregational gatherings – worship, Sunday school, Vacation Bible School, daycare, nursery, etc. - be suspended until the end of August. Sessions that have approved in-person worship should plan outdoor gatherings with social distancing in August or until such time as the governor of North Carolina moves the state into Phase III. Virtual and long-distance engagement is strongly encouraged.**

Additionally, the Executive Board recommends that sessions which approve in-person worship consider the following list.

1. Worship should be outdoors and implement social distancing. Indoor worship should only be considered when “impossible” to gather outdoors.
2. Considering the Governor’s Executive Order (Executive Order #147), gatherings – outdoor and indoor – should require participants wear masks/face coverings. Read section II.C of Executive Order #147 for a list of face covering exceptions.
3. Indoor worship should be suspended until the end of August. However, if worship is held indoors the session should consider the following.
  - a. Recent executive orders have limited indoor gathering participation to 10 persons. Session may consider limiting in-person worship participation to a number that allows easy social distancing within the worship space. Add additional services if necessary.
  - b. Remove from pews/seats items that can be touched by multiple participants (hymnals, Bibles, writing utensils, envelopes, fans, etc.).
  - c. Sanitize seating, doorknobs, bathrooms, and other common spaces between services.
  - d. Rope off pews to ensure 6 feet of separation between rows. Seating every other pew usually does not equal 6 feet of separation.
  - e. Provide hand sanitizer, masks, and gloves for participants that do not have their own.

- f. Have a designated and gloved handler of common touch surfaces (doors, offering plate).
  - g. Plan who will address people that do not wear masks, gloves, or social distance.
  - h. Invite participants to bring their own bread and juice for communion or provide pre-packaged communion cups with wafers and juice.
  - i. Open windows and doors are preferable to circulating air through the air conditioner.
  - j. Listen to instrumental or recorded music instead of singing congregationally.
  - k. Singers/Soloist and preacher should be as far as 20 feet away from the congregation unless masked or behind plexiglass.
4. Those attending session meetings held indoors should wear face coverings while social distancing.
  5. Check with local law enforcement about local restrictions for in-person gatherings.
  6. Notify your insurance company that you intend to return to in-person worship. Ask if your insurance has benchmarks or guidelines for returning to in-person worship.
  7. Communicate your plan to safely gather in-person with the congregation. Are you limiting participation numbers? How will you encourage social distancing? Will you require masks and gloves be worn? How will you sanitize and disinfect? Will bathrooms be accessible? How will you safely create, distribute, and dispose of items like bulletins, hymn/song lyrics, etc.?
  8. Keep the names of all worship attendees. If someone contracts COVID-19, you will need to communicate with your congregation and members who may have interacted with that individual. How will you communicate while maintaining privacy and pastoral care?
  9. Update your building use agreements to reflect the new realities of COVID-19. Determine if you are also agreeing to permit facility usage for other in-person gatherings like weddings, funerals, anonymous groups, etc.
  10. Maintain an online streaming option for those that will not participate in-person. How might you continue virtual small group gatherings, discipleship classes, Sunday School activities for those that cannot participate in-person?
  11. Remember that "Christ is Lord of the conscience". Neither those that participate nor those that refuse to participate in in-person worship are to be judged. Session can decide to provide facilities for in-person gatherings. Individual members and pastoral voices can choose whether to participate in person. Session should make "reasonable accommodation" for pastoral voices that excuse themselves from participating in-person for in-person worship.

**The Executive Board of Mission Cabinet is closely monitoring the status of the pandemic in NC and will reconvene to provide guidance as things change.**

Easter tide Blessings

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Rev. J. B. Long". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the text "Easter tide Blessings".