



## Presbytery of Coastal Carolina

*One Presbytery ~ Three Covenant Communities*

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Presbytery of Coastal Carolina,

Prayers that you are well and that all around you are healthy! Sadly, Covid-19 continues to impact our lives and our world. Recently the governor issued Executive Order #169. This executive order moves the state of North Carolina into Phase III. The move to this phase is not an indication that the virus is no longer among us or even that all signs are showing significant decreases. Instead the Executive Order mentions stabilization of numbers, modest decline in comparison to our highest numbers, and sufficient capacity in health care systems for those in need of hospitalization. Phase III is not proof that “all is clear”. This Executive Order is likened to “a dimmer switch” that proposes gradual and incremental changes.

In this same spirit the Executive Board of The Presbytery of Coastal Carolina mandates that the presbytery make the following gradual allowances:

- **Regarding presbytery committees/commissions/events, small in-door gatherings are allowed.** Max participation for these presbytery gatherings shall be 20 participants. These meetings shall maintain a virtual option for participants more comfortable meeting in this way. Chairs/moderators must ensure meeting rooms provide sufficient space to social distance and shall enforce masks be worn properly in accordance with safety guidelines. The names of in-person attendees shall be recorded in minutes.
- **Regarding presbytery, small gatherings for Commissioning and Installation Services of pastoral voices shall be allowed.** Max participation for these presbytery gatherings shall be 20 participants including members of the commission and the person being commissioned/installed. These gatherings of the presbytery shall provide a virtual option for all other participants and for those more comfortable meeting in this way. Chairs/moderators must ensure the gathering space is sufficient to social distance and enforce masks be worn properly in accordance with safety guidelines. The names of in-person attendees shall be recorded in the minutes. Outdoor gatherings for commissioning and installation services of pastoral voices must include social distancing and enforce masks be worn properly in accordance with safety guidelines.
- **Regarding congregational worship, the Executive Board continues to encourage sessions to provide virtual or outdoor worship services.** Sessions that provide in-person and indoor worship services should notify their insurance companies and request any guidance their insurance carrier provides.
- **Regarding congregational gatherings, the Executive Board recommends sessions that allows small gatherings in-door (Bible Studies, book groups, committee meetings) determine maximum attendance numbers.** Session should encourage masking and social distancing for in-door and outdoor gatherings. Session shall determine if groups are responsible for cleaning rooms/bathrooms and if the church will provide cleaning supplies. Session should provide virtual options for participants that feel more comfortable meeting in this way.

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. Sessions that permit indoor worship should consider the following.

- a. Run heat and/or air conditioning 24 hours before worship. Turn off when worship begins to prevent circulation. Also consider running air conditioning with windows open to ensure circulation.
  - b. Determine what you require/mandate for outside groups using the facilities? Will you leave supplies and mandate the group clean their space after usage?
  - c. 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.
  - d. Remove from pews/seats items that can be touched by multiple participants (hymnals, Bibles, writing utensils, envelopes, fans, etc.).
  - e. Sanitize seating, doorknobs, bathrooms, and other common spaces between services.
  - f. Rope off pews to ensure 6 feet of separation between rows. Seating every other pew usually does not equal 6 feet of separation.
  - g. Provide hand sanitizer, masks, and gloves for participants that do not have their own.
  - h. Have a designated and gloved handler of common touch surfaces (doors, offering plate).
  - i. Plan who will address people that do not wear masks, gloves, or social distance.
  - j. Invite participants to bring their own bread and juice for communion or provide pre-packaged communion cups with wafers and juice.
  - k. Listen to instrumental or recorded music instead of singing congregationally.
  - a. Singers/Soloist and preacher should be as far as 20 feet away from the congregation unless masked or behind plexiglass.
3. Those attending meetings held indoors should wear face coverings while social distancing.
  4. 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.?
  5. 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?
  6. 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.
  7. 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.**

Eastertide Blessings

