



National Baptist Convention of America Int'l. Inc.
" A Convention That Serves Congregations "

CORONAVIRUS AND THE CHURCH TOOLKIT



A toolkit to help NBCA churches understand the coronavirus and how to protect your church and members

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I. OVERVIEW

In light of the recent development of the coronavirus and the many precautions that we are encouraged to take, President Tolbert thought it is important that NBCA provides a document that will provide important information to assist churches, state conventions and associations in making decisions regarding the altering and/or cancellation of church services and upcoming events.

II. WHAT IS THE CORONAVIRUS

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the Coronavirus (COVID-19) disease is a new disease that causes respiratory illness in people and can spread from person to person. COVID-19 is a new coronavirus that has not previously been seen in humans. This virus was first identified during an investigation into an outbreak in Wuhan, China in late December 2019.

III. SYMPTOMS AND SPREADING THE VIRUS

According to the CDC, reported illnesses have ranged from mild symptoms to severe illness and death has been confirmed from the COVID-19 cases.

The following symptoms may appear **2-14 days after exposure**.

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person.

- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
- Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.
- These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.

Older adults and people who have severe underlying chronic medical conditions like heart or lung disease or diabetes seem to be at higher risk for developing more serious complications from COVID-19 illness. Please consult with your health care provider about additional steps you may be able to take to protect yourself.

There are concerns that the amount of people with Coronavirus and the death rate can be higher than reported because there are so many cases that are not yet identified.

IV. PREVENTION AND PRECAUTIONS

Everyone plays an important role to play in protecting ourselves, our family, churches and community from the wide spread of the coronavirus. We have listed several critical steps that the CDC encourages everyone to take.



Clean your hands often

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands



Avoid close contact

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Put distance between yourself and other people if COVID-19 is spreading in your community. This is especially important for people who are at higher risk of getting very sick.



Cover coughs and sneezes

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow.
- Throw used tissues in the trash
- Immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, clean your hands with a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.



Take steps protect others

- Stay home if you are sick, except to get medical care



Wear a facemask if you are sick

- If you are sick: You should wear a facemask when you are around other people (e.g., sharing a room or vehicle) and before you enter a healthcare provider's office. If you are not able to wear a facemask (for example, because it causes trouble breathing), then you should do your best to cover your coughs and sneezes, and people who are caring for you should wear a facemask if they enter your room.
- If you are NOT sick: You do not need to wear a facemask unless you are caring for someone who is sick (and they are not able to wear a facemask). Facemasks may be in short supply and they should be saved for caregivers.



Clean and disinfect

- Clean AND disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily. This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks.
- If surfaces are dirty, clean them: Use detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.

V. CHURCH PREPAREDNESS

The coronavirus outbreak has caused many churches to start thinking about alternative ways to hold worship services, Bible study and other weekly meetings held at the church. Due to the increasing concern about the novel Coronavirus pandemic, large meetings at colleges, universities, sporting venues, and houses of worship are being suspended.

It may be in the best interest of your particular congregation to do the same. However, if you determine to continue with worship during this time, it is highly recommended that you practice social distancing until further notice. To that end, the following actions are encouraged while attending worship:

Precautions to Take at Church

1. Ask members to stay home if they are sick.
2. Suspend handshaking, handholding, hugging, and kissing in favor of the elbow bump or waving.
3. Limit seating on benches or chairs to maintain a distance of at least 3 feet between individual worshippers.
4. Have extra tissues and trash cans readily available so members can easily access them if they need to cough or sneeze. If not available, please ask members to cover their coughs with the sleeve of the elbow and not in their hands.
5. Have enough soap so members can wash their hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use can use alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
6. Consider using pre-packaged communion packets for communion. NBCA has a partnership with Blessed Communion, who offers fresh, pre-filled communion cups with wafer and sealed juice. For more information on ordering from Blessed Communion, please visit NBCA's website.



Display Signage for Members and Visitors

Place signage on the front door and throughout the church to let the members know that your church is exercising precautions during this time. Below is a sample of wording that you can use.

To Our Members and Visitors

Due to the recent Coronavirus crisis, we have decided to heed the advice of the CDC; therefore, we are temporarily replacing handshakes and hugs with loving waving of the hands.

We are concerned about your spiritual health, as well as your physical health, so we thank you for understanding.

May God continue to bless you.



PRESENCE without being PRESENT

Understanding Alternative Methods of Worshipping - NBCA recognizes that temporarily moving worship from a church building to online worship (e-Church) will be a new concept for many and we wanted to provide options that are free to use, and the technology is simple to get started. Although this is such an unfortunate instance, the positive piece is that once your church embraces technology, this will be an evangelism tool that your church can continue to use for the sick & shut-in, as well as the unreached persons in the community and throughout the world.

There are many social media platforms that have options for live streaming. The pastor can hold a Bible study from the comfort of his home and have members and friends watch him on their smartphone and computers. Also, pastors may opt to only have themselves and worship leaders in the sanctuary and have the congregation worship online.

The Use of Technology

1. Facebook Live – Facebook Live is a streaming option that Facebook offers that is ideal during this time. It allows your members and other people on Facebook to join your streaming service from the comfort of their home. Another great feature is that your live streaming will also remain on your Facebook page so that people can continue to be blessed by your online worship service.



How to go live on Facebook:

- Click Create Post at the top of your newsfeed
- Click “Live Video”
- Type a message so people know what you are broadcasting
- Click the “Go Live” button.

2. Texting – Not everyone has internet access, but most have cell phones. Consider setting up a texting service such as Flocknote.com. Send encouraging texts, scripture verses, prayers, or news about one another.



3. Phone Tree – Another option for churches who need to communicate; however, are not comfortable with technology then they can also utilize the phone tree method. This is simply getting a list of phone numbers and asking members to call other members and relay the message from the pastor.



4. Food Delivery – Consider setting up a food delivery service (leave at the door) for those who are ill and need food.



5. Social Media Hashtag – Setup a unique hashtag for your church on Instagram and ask members to share photos so the members can see each other.



Exploring Online Giving

We understand that most churches depend heavily on the Sunday tithes and offerings and may feel that they need to continue holding church because of financial obligations. If you decide to embrace the e-church method, there are secured online platforms that your members can use to pay their tithes and offerings.

1. **Givelify** – Givelify is one of NBCA partners who offers a mobile app wherein members and friends can quickly download the app on their smartphone and give their tithes and offerings.



How to get started – For churches that currently do not use Givelify, you can get started in just a few minutes. There is no programming, no extra technology, no sign-up fee or monthly fees. To get started, visit www.givelify.com. If you need additional information, please contact our Givelify representative, Reggie Chandler at 317-442-9524.

Discussion Points to Help Get the Conversation Started at Your Church

As you can see, there are a lot of factors that pastors and leaders need to prayerfully consider in order to make the best decision for their church and members. This crisis no doubt forces pastors to think outside of their comfort zone and explore non-traditional methods of worshipping. Below is a list of questions to assist you in getting the conversation started with your leaders.

Questions:

1. What routine and extensive cleaning do we need to do weekly to keep the church safe for members to worship?
2. What preventative supplies do we need to stock up on? (Ex: wipes, tissues, hand sanitizer, etc.)
3. What preventative measures should we implement immediately? (Ex: no hugging, seating 3 feet away from other members, etc.)
4. What upcoming large church events should we consider cancelling or rescheduling?
5. How can we support members who may be infected with the coronavirus?
6. How do we disinfect our church if someone with the coronavirus attended our church?
7. How do we notify members if someone with the coronavirus attended our church?
8. If we move to an online worship service, which platform is best and how do we get started?
9. How do we communicate with our members that we take the coronavirus seriously and what our churches decision is in regard to worshipping?

Theology

- Remember and remind one another that all persons are God's creation and valuable. Economic output does not equal a person's value - this is social justice moment about which the church must speak out. The poor will be hardest hit by this crisis. The virus is exposing the flaws in our society including the lack of paid sick leave and the lack of health insurance.
- It's okay to be scared, but don't let fear control you.
- Don't stop feeling. "Fear often seeks to make us focus inward and ignore the plight of others. It is moments like these Christ calls us to take care of the least of these, understanding that we are taking care of Christ in doing so. So, check in on your neighbors, co-workers and friends. Offer to make them a meal and share some cleaning supplies." (Quote from BSK student David Grady)
- How we act as a church and as individual Christians, teaches the world what we think God is like. Be like Jesus. Live by 1 Corinthians 13.

VI. SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUES RELATED TO THE CORONAVIRUS

Even as we heed the advice of the CDC and media, we recognize that there are underlying social justice issues that do not allow many people to comfortably take the necessary precautions.

- The poor, homeless and elderly do not have access to the same care and preventative measures as other people. If they have to be quarantined, buying the necessary household items, healthy food and extra prescriptions will be a financial challenge for them
- Staying home and potentially not getting paid if they are sick. Currently, there is no law in place that mandates that employers pay hourly employees if they get the coronavirus. This will cause many people to possibly go to work sick and in turn, spread the coronavirus to co-workers.

NBCA's Social and Community Justice Commission is staying abreast of the situation and documenting social justice concerns as it relates to the coronavirus. If you have questions or concerns, we encourage you to contact the Chairman, Rev. Brian K. Brown via email at socialjusticecommission@nbcainc.com and he will do his best to assist you with your concerns.

This situation has been alarming and evoked fear, yet we choose to see the teachable moment amidst the chaos. Although the coronavirus did not originate in this country it has connected us all in some way or form. In the words of the Great, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. this reminds us that we are all connected.

“In a real sense all life is inter-related. All men are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.” – MLK

*(Quote from St. Stephen Church, Louisville, KY
Press Release regarding the Coronavirus in Kentucky)*

VII. NEXT STEPS

On Saturday, March 14, 2020, at 2:00 CDT (3:00 p.m. EST), President Tolbert will be hosting a conference call with pastors to discuss the importance of churches being prepared.

Conference Call Number: (712) 775-7031
Access Code: 238-176-505

The following leaders will be on the call and will be sharing important information that will help guide pastors, as they are faced with making importation decisions for their church.

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VIII. CONTRIBUTORS

Thank you to the following persons for contributing invaluable content for NBCA's coronavirus toolkit.



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IX. ADDITIONAL CORONAVIRUS INFORMATION FROM THE CDC

COVID-19
CORONAVIRUS DISEASE

SYMPTOMS OF CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019

Patients with COVID-19 have experienced mild to severe respiratory illness.

Symptoms* can include



***Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure.**

Seek medical advice if you develop symptoms, and have been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19 or if you live in or have recently been in an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19.



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For more information: www.cdc.gov/COVID19-symptoms

STOP THE SPREAD OF GERMS

Help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases like COVID-19.

Avoid close contact with people who are sick.



Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.



Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.



Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.



Stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care.



Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.



For more information: www.cdc.gov/COVID19



Hands that look clean can still have icky germs!

Wash YOUR HANDS!



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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