

## A STATEMENT OF COMPASSION AND CARE – 2

March 14, 2020

*Get wisdom; get insight; do not forget, and do not turn away from the words of my mouth. Do not forsake her, and she will keep you; love her, and she will guard you. The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight.*

*Proverbs 4:5-7, ESV*



Dear Church:

Many in our church have contacted me seeking my counsel on how their congregation should respond to the outbreak of the Corona Virus and the recommendation that we should avoid large group gatherings. After communication with our Regional leaders, medical personnel, and in respect to the State of Emergency declared by Governor Cooper, I affirm the action of those who have suspended their events and regular worship services this weekend, and possibly future weeks depending on the counsel of our state health department. Your Regional Minister has suspended her travels for the foreseeable future. The Executive Committee will meet this week to help evaluate best practices for upcoming events.

My recommendation for suspension of activity remains the same for churches/ministries with mobile or stationary food pantries, restaurants, nesting congregations, incubator businesses, ‘church-in-formation’ house gatherings, clothing closets, gardening ministries (*some have already begun pre-gardening soil prep*), pre-schools and daycares hosted in our buildings, and any other event that brings groups together. Several of our congregations own property other than the edifice which houses their sanctuary. Please take all precautions to ensure that all property owned by your church is operating under the appropriate health guidelines. It is even advisable to check-in with your insurance agent and review procedures for property owners in these situations.

In making these recommendations, I am emphasizing the seriousness of this pandemic, as did Rev. David Mallory, retired minister of Hillyer Memorial Christian Church, Raleigh, who writes:

*I was wrong. When the fervor over the coronavirus first emerged, I was convinced the media was over-hyping the situation. Granted, there was (and still is) a lot of unknowns. Clearly, a lot of folks are getting sick. It has impacted commerce and events all over. But is it really necessary to isolate cruise ships, shut down events, declare states of emergency? This was a virus that, for the majority of people, would be nothing more than a fever and a cough. It was a bad cold! But then I heard a pandemics expert unveiling the true danger. “It’s not about your health,” he astutely noted, “it’s about theirs.”*

*So, I was wrong. I was wrong because I was only considering the impact that the virus would have on me. Because I am in relatively good health and not in the high-risk category, for me, it would likely be nothing more than a bad cold. But unless we harness the spread of the virus, what might it be for someone whose health is more fragile?*

*Living in community requires that sometimes I will be inconvenienced for the sake of my neighbor. If staying home from a concert or not going to the office will ensure that others will be at less risk, it is my responsibility to do that. That is how community works.*

*I think the apostle Paul would have fared well through such a crisis because he understood community. “Each of you should look not only to your own interests,” he writes to the church at Philippi, “but also to the interests of others.” Perhaps the media should be more diligent in reporting that.*

<https://davidtmallory.wordpress.com/2020/03/13/coronavirus-and-community/?fbclid=IwAR07Q9pTuDn6VdnekALF16m6-AQbJ3DTczgz5vlbEnenu0vSnphRR0suuA>

We can all hear David's wisdom in this writing. He *took the time* to acquire the necessary knowledge making an informed decision about his position during this crisis. What is most beneficial about David's experience is how his interaction with knowledge, framed his appreciation of the seriousness of the crisis without leading him to fear or panic. Gaining the correct knowledge you need for life is a Christian practice of engaging peace. I trust God's loving hand to guide each of our hearts as we seek wisdom and get understanding.

### **Sharing Information**

- ⇒ Please contact me immediately if there is an outbreak of COVID-19/Corona Virus in your congregation or community. [valerie@ncdisciples.org](mailto:valerie@ncdisciples.org) or 252.291.4047 ext. 202.
- ⇒ Please do not disclose publicly the name or personal information of anyone impacted by COVID-19/Corona Virus in your congregation or community.
- ⇒ Share what you and your congregations are doing to love one another, your neighbor and the stranger among you in the midst of the pandemic.

Mystery can be very daunting for children. Here are some tips for talking with them.

### **General principles for talking to Children**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/talking-with-children.html>

#### **Remain calm and reassuring.**

- Remember that children will react to both what you say and how you say it. They will pick up cues from the conversations you have with them and with others.

#### **Make yourself available to listen and to talk.**

- Make time to talk. Be sure children know they can come to you when they have questions.

#### **Avoid language that might blame others and lead to stigma.**

- Remember that viruses can make anyone sick, regardless of a person's race or ethnicity. Avoid making assumptions about who might have COVID-19.

#### **Pay attention to what children see or hear on television, radio, or online.**

- Consider reducing the amount of screen time focused on COVID-19. Too much information on one topic can lead to anxiety.

#### **Provide information that is honest and accurate.**

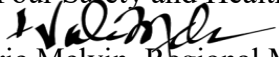
- Give children information that is truthful and appropriate for the age and developmental level of the child.
- Talk to children about how some stories on COVID-19 on the Internet and social media may be based on rumors and inaccurate information.

#### **Teach children everyday actions to reduce the spread of germs.**

- Remind children to stay away from people who are coughing or sneezing or sick.
- Remind them to cough or sneeze into a tissue or their elbow, then throw the tissue into the trash.
- Discuss any new actions that may be taken at school to help protect children and school staff.(e.g., increased handwashing, cancellation of events or activities)
  - Get children into a handwashing habit.
- Teach them to wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing their nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food.
- If soap and water are not available, teach them to use hand sanitizer. Hand sanitizer should contain at least 60% alcohol. Supervise young children when they use hand sanitizer to prevent swallowing alcohol, especially in schools and childcare facilities.

**If it is your church's decision to hold worship or any other event, I offer a strong recommendation to follow healthy and safe practices available through the links on the next page.**

With Your Safety and Health in Mind,

  
+Valerie Melvin, Regional Minister  
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in NC

## COVID-19 'Best Practice' Resources

Messages from the General Minister and President

<https://ncdisciples.org/2020/03/14/general-minister-and-president-offers-pastoral-word-in-response-to-covid19-pandemic/>

Disciples Resources:

<https://disciples.org/dns/disciples-and-covid-19/>

Week of Compassion Guidelines for Congregations:

<https://disciples.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Preparedness-for-Pandemics-2-03.03.20.pdf>

Talking with children about Coronavirus Disease 2019: Messages for parents, school staff, and others working with children

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/talking-with-children.html>

More Links for Talking with kids

A [comic strip \[ncsu.us13.list-manage.com\]](https://www.ncsu.us13.list-manage.com) exploring the coronavirus from NPR

A [guide for parents \[ncsu.us13.list-manage.com\]](https://www.ncsu.us13.list-manage.com) to keeping children both safe and reassured

An [online interactive game \[ncsu.us13.list-manage.com\]](https://www.ncsu.us13.list-manage.com) that children can play to learn more about how germs spread and how to wash your hands

World Health Organization

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>

Center for Disease Control and Prevention

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/guidance-community-faith-organizations.html>

The Insurance Board

<https://www.insuranceboard.org/safety-resources/>

### **Additional Resources that may be helpful in setting up social media worship platforms:**

[Short tutorial \(text\) for simple live stream](#) of worship (provided by the Nebraska region)

[Setting up live streaming](#) (provided by the Christian Church in the Southwest) (*March 10, 2020*)

[Copyright advice from Chalice Press](#) (*March 12, 2020*)

[One License offers gratis license to help cope with corona virus arrangements](#) (*March 13, 2020*)

[Online giving information](#) from the Center for Faith and Giving (*March 11, 2020*)

[Resources to support children and families](#) from Disciples Home Missions' Ministries Across Generations (*March 12, 2020*)

“[A Crisis is a Time for Leadership](#)” from the Center for Faith and Giving (*March 12, 2020*)

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), “[Crises In Your Church: A Guide for Congregational Planning to Handle the Unexpected](#)”