

## Coronavirus Advisory

Assemblies of God, Northern California and Nevada District Council

March 12, 2020

Friends,

Earlier this week, several counties announced legally binding restrictions on gatherings of various sizes. The local Sheriff is enforcing those restrictions.

Yesterday, Gavin Newsome, the Governor of California announced that gatherings of 250 or more being held in the next 30 days should be cancelled or postponed. He also advised that smaller gatherings that do not accommodate social distancing of 6 feet should be cancelled or postponed. I need to clarify, the governor's advisory does not create criminal liability, but it does create legal liability—if a church ignores the advisory, and someone gets sick, the church can be held liable for negligence.

So, what is the district doing and what do we advise our churches to do?

First, we postponing and re-scheduling the Sweet Life and ManUp Conferences. Participants who are already registered for the event will be given the option to roll their registration forward or request a refund. The district is going to lose quite a bit of money because of this, but money is not our first concern. We don't want to be the cause of anyone getting sick.

The District Council is outside the 30 day window, and we are tentatively moving forward with that event. But we'll continue to monitor the situation. We are scheduled to vote on some offices this year, including the office of District Superintendent. But don't worry, if we have to postpone the election, terms of office extend until the election is held. So, we won't be without a Superintendent!

So, what do we advise our churches to do?

In a nutshell, we advise churches to comply with health regulations. Please don't ignore the advisory—it can create legal liability.

If your church is inside the restriction--less than 250 and with sufficient space to accommodate the 6 foot rule, then you are free to meet for worship. Please enforce the no-touching rule and provide lots of hand-sanitizer. And please disinfect the door-knobs and high touch surfaces frequently.

But if your church is larger than 250 or you don't have space to accommodate the 6 foot rule, then we advise you to follow the Governor's advisory and cancel the gatherings.

If you have to cancel gathering, we suggest that you find a way to minister to people in a way that does not involve gathering—and post that on your website, put it on your sign, post it on your door. Let everyone know.

How can you minister to people without gathering? Be creative.

1. One church is doing a Drive-Inn church—everyone stays in their car and the pastor preaches from the church roof.
2. Some churches may have the option of having an outdoor gathering.
3. Some churches could opt to do mini-services—Short services for small groups. A 20 minute service every 30 minutes.

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4. Some churches may opt for small groups meeting in homes. These meetings might be independently lead, or they could be led by phone or video conference.
5. Some churches may simply opt to broadcast the pastor by phone or video conference.

Those last two options require that the congregation have access to the media that you are choosing.

- Most people have a telephone, and so a conference call is the most available choice. However there is no video, and that may be less than optimal.
- If most of your people have access to the internet, then Facebook Live is a good choice—it's easy to setup a FB Live meeting, and easy for people to log-in.

Whatever media you choose, I urge you to find a way to minister to people this Sunday.

There are occasions when major events disrupt our schedule and we have to set aside our plans and address the circumstances. On 9/11. I was in the middle of preaching a sermon series, but I had to set aside that plan and address the people.

This virus has disrupted our lives in surprising ways. It's not that the virus is especially lethal—it's not. But it is especially contagious. And that's what has everyone so anxious.

And people are in a panic. And their behavior is evidence of their fear. They have no faith and are putting their faith in Toilet Paper and Purell.

Friends, we need to minister to them.

Some of them are worried about getting sick or dying. Others are worried about losing a job or paying the bills. Some are worried about their family.

We know that God can protect us from disease and heal disease. We need to minister assurance to people.

We know that life on this earth is merely a prelude to eternity. We need to remind people of this reality and ask them to put their faith in Christ.

In church history there have been several instances where a plagues or pestilence has devastated a population. In each of those instances it was the Christian population that rose up to minister to people.

Christians sometimes risked infection in order to comfort and pray for the afflicted. When most people are running away from the plague, Christians run toward it.

Professor Moss at Notre Dame noted that "epidemic that seemed like the end of the world actually promoted the spread of Christianity." Not only because of the hope of the gospel itself, but also because of the example of compassion, peace that people saw in those Christians.

Our theme for our District Council this year is Compassion. Well, it seems as if God has given us an opportunity to implement that a few weeks earlier than we planned. I'm not saying that we should act

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recklessly and risk infection, but I am asking that we respond to the public situation with compassion, and faith. Who knows, maybe the gospel will spread faster than the coronavirus.

Finally, I'd like you to know that we are praying for you. And let's remember the scripture, "It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed." That's Deuteronomy 31:8

And the word of Jesus in John 14, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."

We are praying for you.