



District Superintendent

Bret L. Allen

December 15, 2020

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CENTER**

Governor Gavin Newsom
1303 10th Street, Suite #1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom:

We are writing this letter for three reasons.

First, we want to assure you that we pray for you often. We understand that, as the Governor of this state, your responsibilities are substantial and that the unique concerns and responsibilities brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic have added to these burdens. The Apostle Paul admonished Christians to give thanks and to pray for “kings and all who are in authority” (1 Timothy 2:1-2). And we want you to know that we are praying for you and will continue to do so as you serve in your office as Governor.

Second, we respectfully ask that you re-evaluate the restrictions that are being placed on worship services.

Our motivation is not to benefit the church. Unlike some businesses, churches have been able to continue much of their ministry remotely and have continued to receive donations. Churches are not as negatively affected as many other ventures. We don’t ask because churches are struggling, we ask because people are struggling. And the most effective way to help people involves in-person gatherings.

We understand that the COVID-19 pandemic poses a genuine health risk to people, and we understand that it is necessary to change social behavior to minimize the contagion. However, we are also seeing the negative impact that the remedy is having on the mental health of public and we are concerned that the trajectory of this trend portends substantial harm to our communities in the future.

Human beings are social and moral creatures. In times of catastrophe, when people are faced with challenges, or questions, or weariness, they find answers, solace, or strength in faith communities. These gatherings are essential for the emotional and mental health in times of uncertainty. Unfortunately, the very things that people need to cope with the circumstances have been taken away from them. We are now seeing the consequences of this isolation: increased suicide, crime, depression, and other maladies. We’ve cited some statistics on this at the end of this letter.

The 450 churches that we represent in our district (and a similar number in our sister district in Southern California) are doing our best to address these needs. Most of our churches have transitioned to online worship, teaching, and connection. Many have experienced an increase in the number of people that we’ve been able to reach. However, there is a limit to what we can do online. People are social and they need in-person gatherings. We may be spared of the virus, but the remedy will harm us anyway. Our society needs to allow worshipping communities to gather again.

Finally, we want to offer our help. Our churches are already actively serving the needs of their local community. However, it occurs to us that there may be other need that we have not seen; some other way that we can help. If so, please contact us and let us know what you would like from us.

Sincerely,

Rev. Bret Allen, District Superintendent

On behalf of the Executive Presbytery of the Assemblies of God, Northern California and Nevada District Council

Assemblies of God

Northern California and Nevada District Council, Inc.

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Statistics

Marriage:

- Reports shows that 34% of married men and women reported increased stress in their marriage because of the pandemic. - American Family Survey

Mental Health Statistics:

- *According to the CDC, 40% of people are suffering from at least one mental health or behavioral issue, including depression, anxiety, PTSD, or substance abuse. That number is three to four times higher than levels reported just one year ago.*
- The pandemic's impact on the mental health of people of color is especially pronounced. Roughly 4 in 10 Black, Latino, or mixed-race people report symptoms of anxiety or depression at above-average rates. - California Healthcare Foundation
- Three out of ten reported symptoms of anxiety disorder or depressive disorder, and one-quarter reported symptoms of a trauma- and stressor-related disorder due to the pandemic.
- Thirteen percent reported having started or increased substance use to cope with stress or emotions related to COVID-19 lockdowns.
- Of particular concern, 11 percent reported they have seriously contemplated suicide in the past thirty days.
- Among those aged eighteen to twenty-four years old, this number was 25 percent. We should pause to consider this statistic: one-quarter of young adults in America contemplated suicide in the month of June.

Website (for above statistics):

https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6932a1.htm?s_cid=mm6932a1_w

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