

**RECOMMENDED CHURCH GUIDELINES FOR COVID-19  
(CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019)  
New Jersey Conference  
March 2020**

Our world is currently impacted by the spread of the COVID-19 virus (coronavirus Disease 2019). How should NJC churches prepare, especially if it continues to expand? Each church should develop a plan for this potential pandemic. Following are proposed guidelines, thought questions, and ideas. Please keep in mind these points in developing your plan:

- Simple/short plans are best
- Members should use caution and follow good hygiene practices at all times
- Each church should respond according to the local threat, keeping in mind your own unique situation

This document contains recommendations based on various threat levels, identified as green, orange and red. Please read and apply these suggestions carefully based on the current threat level.

## **Green Alert**

*General preparations that are good to follow before a crisis develops:*

### **Prevention**

- Hand sanitizer by all church entrances
- Waste baskets by bathroom doors so doors can be opened using paper towels rather than hands
- In children's areas every Sabbath, sanitize children's boxes, props, etc. (these first two ideas are good year-round)
- Routine but comprehensive cleaning of all surfaces commonly touched by hands such as tabletops, the backs of pews, doorknobs, offering receptacles, etc. with an antiviral solution according to instructions between use of these facilities
- Kleenex in pews (visual reminder besides practical use)
- Hand sanitizer available during potluck and other meals
- Questions to consider:
  - Are there special supplies that need to be purchased in bulk such as hand sanitizer, disinfectants, or tissues?
  - Will the janitorial staff need special instruction in appropriate sanitizing?

## Communication/Education

- Centers for Disease Control recognizes that any place people congregate is a wonderful opportunity for education. A bulletin insert can be powerful with prevention tips such as:
  - Sneeze into crook of arm rather than hands
  - ***Please stay home if you are sick***
  - Wash your hands with soap and warm water often for 20 seconds
- Educate, educate, educate by voice, newsletters, email, and inserts.

*When a potential health crisis is developing with future potential of impacting the local level:*

### 1. Identify who will keep watch

- Each church should identify an individual or team who will monitor recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), public health departments at both the state and county level and to process these recommendations to pass along to the church.

### 2. Identify who will decide

- Each church should identify who will be responsible for making strategic decisions during a crisis. The church board may serve as a crisis oversight committee or you may choose to appoint a separate committee. This committee would have the authority to cancel church, potlucks, specific Sabbath School classes, or to enlist organized help from the church for members struggling to care for themselves or their families.
- If you establish a separate committee, consider including the pastor, head elder, head deacon, disaster response coordinator, and health care providers or health care personnel.

### 3. Identify who will monitor

- Establish a means to monitor the number of cases in your church to enable the oversight committee to have the necessary knowledge to advise the church and to make their decisions if your church should require steps not required for other faith-based organizations.

## Orange Alert

*When an immediate health crisis is unfolding within the broader United States but not yet immediately affecting your local community:*

### 1. Practice Social Distancing

- Find creative alternatives to shaking hands
- Maintain a six-foot distance from other individuals when talking
- Self-quarantine if feeling ill
- Temporarily suspend potlucks and other group meals

2. Update members on existing crisis response plans
  - Remind people of safe health practices.
  - Ensure basic Green Status health practices are being followed
3. Identify official channels of communication for the members
  - Constantly communicate with the congregation, to minimize rumors and panic
  - Establish the official church communication channel (email, texting, phonecalls)

## Red Alert

*When an outbreak is happening in your local community:*

1. Consider other worship alternatives or suspending services
  - Prepare for spiritual feeding of members by
    - Sermons on-line, including livestream on social media
    - Planned daily Bible reading guides/blogs
    - Sabbath School lesson blogs
    - Facebook/Twitter accounts
    - TV: HOPE Channel, and any other Adventist Channel
    - Call the pastor
    - The pastor/elders call members
    - Other creative ways
  - Communicate any closures to the members through all available communication channels
  - Identify ways essential functions can be done from home or online
  - Encourage the members to use Adventist Giving Online at [www.adventistgiving.org](http://www.adventistgiving.org)
2. Provide basic spiritual care for those in crisis
  - Prayer chains – either online, by phone or both
  - Phone trees for members to daily call one another (especially older members)
3. Inform renters of facility closure
  - If the church decides to close the facility due to a health crisis, **inform all renters** of the facility closure and make arrangements for adjusting rental fees due to lost usage