

Updated 4/25/2020

Dear CREC Brothers and Sisters,

We trust the Lord is using this extraordinary time, and the fear that has accompanied it, as a means to draw men everywhere to Himself. While the fear of men who greatly fear death is understandable, we Christians should be shining examples of those who oppose death as an enemy but do not fear it. For us, to live is Christ and to die is gain. Let us not be caught up in the panic but be strong examples of Jesus to the world, the One who is the calm in the storm.

Let us pray that God will grant us many opportunities to proclaim the Lordship of Jesus Christ over all things. To God be the glory. Amen.

### **Economic Impact and Threat**

There are at least two major aspects of this worldwide crisis to consider. One is the threat of the disease medically. The other is the damage to lives as jobs disappear. There are now places in the world where the shutdown is doing more damage than the virus.

We exhort you to engage your local, state, and national leaders to express your concerns about the damage done to individuals and families as they lose their livelihoods and continue in isolation. Exhort your officials to consider the damaging consequences of isolation and economic harm in all future decisions, and to return us all to work and full public worship as soon as possible.

### **Concerning Worship Services**

We Recommend the Following Counsel to Churches

1. Under the current circumstances, follow the restrictions of the Governor in your state, or the President in your country, as to meeting size limits.

It is now apparent to us, that some of our churches are either now, or soon, no longer going to follow governmental guidelines.

If the government orders are too stringent and unreasonable in your area, we encourage you to petition your ruling authorities to loosen the requirements.

If you choose to disregard these orders in order to exercise your freedom of religion, and U.S. Constitutional rights of speech and assembly, we exhort you to do so in a gracious and respectful manner.

You should recognize that members of your churches will have a wide range of views on the prudence of publicly meeting or not, both because of their views of the actual dangers involved from the virus, as well as the prudence of obeying or disregarding government guidelines for meetings. Be patient with all.

U.S. Attorney General William Barr has stated that standing up for liberty is one of his highest priorities. He has also stated that he will side with churches as they stand against restrictions that go too far. He has already done so. That is encouraging.

For those of you in other countries, use wisdom and discretion based upon your Constitution, and the potential threat to your people that disregarding government guidelines may occasion.

If you choose to disregard guidelines, do so with the health and well-being of your congregants and community in mind. We have already stated that their health and well-being includes their ability to provide for their families and participate in the public sphere, including public worship. If you disregard meeting guidelines, we encourage you to do so with as many local churches as possible, rather than as an individual church. We encourage you to seek legal counsel if you choose to openly disregard guidelines, especially if you anticipate conflict with local or state officials.

2. Consider holding Drive In Services where possible. Many churches are now doing Drive In Services and have reported this to be well received by their congregants and an improvement from live-streamed or recorded services. This appears to fall within the parameters of acceptable church meetings by the government guidelines now in place in most locations.
3. If not doing Drive In Services, consider continuing live-streamed or pre-recorded services.
4. Outside services, not in vehicles, may soon be another option. As restrictions loosen, we encourage you to gather your people together in whatever ways are available and seem wise to you.
5. As size restrictions loosen, hold worship services with as many people as you can. You may want to hold multiple services to fall within those guidelines. Until we are all the way back to regular normal worship together, continue to live stream your service as many of your congregants may still be unable or unwilling to participate in person.

6. We support churches that choose to follow all government guidelines for as long as they are implemented.
7. Communion
  - a. If you are not able to gather, we support suspending the Supper until you are able to meet again.
  - b. That said, some churches have practiced Communion in different creative ways. While we are concerned about the precedent some of these practices may set, we recognize these are abnormal times, and would encourage you to clarify that these are extraordinary measures for extraordinary times.
  - c. During these extraordinary times, we caution against individual families doing Communion on their own. Individual families are not independent churches.

Grace and Peace,

The Presiding Ministers of the CREC

Virgil Hurt	Presiding Minister of Council
Garrett Crow	PMoC Pro Tempore
Steve Wilkins	Wycliffe Presbytery
Gregg Strawbridge	Augustine Presbytery
Rob Hadding	Athanasius Presbytery
Stuart Bryan	Knox Presbytery
Rob Davis	Tyndale Presbytery
Dave Hatcher	Anselm Presbytery