



March 13, 2020

North Texas Conference Responds To Coronavirus Pandemic

We live in an anxious time. The number of confirmed cases of the coronavirus continues to rise, and there is much about this virus that remains unknown. Two things we do know, however, are that none of us is immune and that persons over 60 or with underlying chronic health conditions are particularly vulnerable.

During anxious times, people of faith find great comfort and strength through coming together. This is what we do. But these are also unprecedented times.

On Thursday evening, Judge Clay Jenkins issued a state of emergency declaration for Dallas County after tests revealed five new presumptive-positive cases of coronavirus. Beginning 11 a.m. Friday, March 13 and continuing through 11 a.m. Friday, March 20 – though Judge Jenkins said this period could be extended – there will be a prohibition on public gatherings of 500 or more people. What’s more, Judge Jenkins strongly discourages public gatherings of 250 or more people as well as those with 10 or more people who are over the age of 60 and/or are part of a high-risk group.

In this moment, the way that we as people of faith can do the most good and do no harm actually is to refrain from coming together. We are learning that the most effective way to slow the spread of the coronavirus in our communities is to practice “social distancing” – minimizing exposure to infected individuals by avoiding large public gatherings and maintaining 6 feet of space from others. Practicing social distancing can be a way for us to prevent further infections and literally save human lives.

To this end, I am requesting the following:

- All churches in the Metro and North Central districts cancel their worship services for the next two Sundays, March 15 and March 22.
- Churches in less-densely populated areas in the East and Northwest districts may gather but should take extra precautions to provide a safe and sanitary environment. These churches should pay close attention to recommendations from local health departments and school districts.
- For all of our churches, people over 60 or with pre-existing conditions stay at home the next two Sundays and worship online. (PDF of NTC churches that offer livestream services.)

In addition, the North Texas Conference staff will be canceling all events involving more than 20 people and convening other meetings using teleconferencing technology. We will adhere to this approach for the months of March and April and reassess in the coming weeks.

For more information on how we can play our part to keep our communities safe, please reference this Coronavirus Resources page on our North Texas Conference website.

While worship services and other church gatherings are canceled, it will be even more important for pastors and lay leaders to be attentive to our older and more vulnerable members. The ramifications of this pandemic are more than about health. People are at risk of loneliness and of suffering economic impacts.

This unprecedented moment gives us the opportunity to witness to our faith in ways other than gathering for worship. Pray for healthcare workers, community leaders, those suffering from the virus and their loved ones, and those who are being negatively impacted by this pandemic. As individual disciples and as churches, keep your eyes open for emerging needs and find creative ways to meet them. Be a source of hope in your circles of influence and share your unshakable trust in the Lord's protection.

You will hear from me again soon as this situation continues to unfold.

Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael McKee". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael McKee

