



March 24, 2020

Grace and Peace,

I am writing to you today to offer continued love, support, hope and clarity as we live in this time of doing ministry in the midst of a pandemic. It seems as if the ground is shifting day by day and moment by moment. I am thankful for your willingness to be flexible and faithful as we seek to serve all in our care.

In an effort to continue to offer support throughout the presbytery, our leaders have worked hard to compile recommendations for how to remain safe while serving in a time of social distancing and digital discipleship. The recommendations in this letter are also influenced by the most recent executive orders written by Mayor Bottoms and Governor Kemp. For those in the city of Atlanta, the 14-day shelter-in-place plan has implications for live streaming worship on-site. For those outside of the City of Atlanta, gatherings cannot exceed 10 people. Please click on the links below to find the PDF versions of both executive orders:

Mayor Bottoms -

https://www.atlantaga.gov/Home/ShowDocument?id=45508&fbclid=IwAR3SC51oa5HrBzDmlgkbfqHyOVf2TeITS2i9OlzuFd1LeIAfFD6avK-R8_Q

Governor Kemp -

<https://gov.georgia.gov/executive-action/executive-orders/2020-executive-orders>

Presbytery of Greater Atlanta Staff, Committee on Ministry, and Council recommendations for a response to COVID-19:

The following recommendations are based on guidelines and recommendations from the federal government, state and local governments, the CDC, and a theological understanding of what it means to love neighbor and to be a good neighbor in the midst of the pandemic of coronavirus/ COVID-19.

- **Worship/Meetings:**
 - **FOR CHURCHES IN THE CITY OF ATLANTA, ABIDE BY THE SHELTER-IN-PLACE ORDER FROM TUESDAY, MARCH 24TH THROUGH THE 14 DAY PERIOD.**
 - **FOR CHURCHES OUTSIDE OF ATLANTA, DO NOT GATHER IN GROUPS OVER 10 PEOPLE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE EXECUTIVE ORDER BY GOVERNOR KEMP.**
 - We **STRONGLY** recommend that groups over 10 do not gather in person until **FURTHER** notice (*including worship services, weddings, funerals, and other ministry/ programmatic gatherings*).



- We **STRONGLY** recommend that those who meet in person practice social distancing at all times.
 - We **strongly recommend** that staff and clergy minimize time onsite, while remembering the importance of checking in on the safety of the building on a steady basis.
 - We **strongly recommend** that churches/organizations keep the buildings clean as a means of flattening the curve and keeping people safe.
 - We **encourage** churches to explore new and creative ways to pre-record or live-stream elements of worship that are made accessible to members.
 - We **invite** churches to explore the utilization of online giving for their members during this time of social distancing.
 - We **hope** that churches will work together creatively and collaboratively, sharing online resources, and carrying the load together for ministering to congregants, clergy and the community at large.
- **Pastoral Care/Visitation**
 - We **STRONGLY RECOMMEND** that clergy and visitation teams utilize telephone and other electronic means of “visiting/connecting with” members.
 - We recommend that churches receive consent (preferably written) when doing face-to-face visits with sick members. Please be sure to be in dialogue with the family members who would be impacted by your face-to-face visit.
- **Mission/Vision**
 - We **STRONGLY RECOMMEND** that congregations live into the Matthew 25 emphasis of caring for the least of these by practicing and participating in “distance” ministry.
 - We recommend that churches educate other churches on ways to remain connected and compassionate in the face of an epidemic.

My prayer is that God will give us eyes to “see” so we can do ministry with love, wisdom, and compassion. I have been meditating on the scripture from Galatians 6:9-10. I love the language found in The Message - Galatians 6:9-10 The Message (MSG) - ***So let’s not allow ourselves to get fatigued doing good. At the right time we will harvest a good crop if we don’t give up, or quit. Right now, therefore, every time we get the chance, let us work for the benefit of all, starting with the people closest to us in the community of faith.*** Thank you, church, for doing what is right, for serving God, for loving your neighbor, and for walking with God.

Let us not grow weary, this day and always.

With much love and deep peace,



Aisha

Executive Presbyter

Find these and other resources on our website: <https://www.atlpcusa.org/covid19>

Join our Newsletter mailing list to receive updates via email: <https://www.atlpcusa.org/newsletter>