

The following Q/A may be helpful as members ask questions:

Q: How did we come to this decision to cancel the Worship Gathering?

- First, we want to help protect those in our midst who might be more susceptible to viruses (those over 60 and/or with preexisting conditions, i.e. heart or respiratory conditions.) Many of our members are over 60 so not meeting together is the wise and protective thing to do.
- Secondly, some state and local authorities have mandated that no gatherings occur over 250 people and **smaller gatherings need to ensure 6 feet distance between people**. Even with our small groups (most under 30 in attendance average/week) it would be challenging to meet the 6 ft. distance guideline.
- The GCI Home Office, considering the current state of national emergency and the growing spread of the COVID-10 virus, asked congregations to cancel services on March 15. Together we will decide on a week by week basis what to do in the future.
- We want to do our part in helping “flatten the curve” to slow the spread and lower the impact on the health care community. The experts say that ‘social distancing’ is the only way we can slow the spread. See this chart & article: <https://www.vox.com/2020/3/10/21171481/coronavirus-us-cases-quarantine-cancellation>

Dear Pastor and Treasurers,

You are in our prayers today as we consider the good work you do participating with Jesus in His ministry and sharing the hope we have in Him. Thank you for your example of serving those around you every day with love, enthusiasm and dedication.

We encourage you today to take a moment to pause and read through Psalm 23 and 46 reflecting on God's sovereignty over our lives. And in light of preparation for Easter, John 14 assures us of the peace and comfort that Jesus leaves with us.

With all the news about the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) around us and how it is affecting the world, it is good to pause and remember who is in control of our destiny and then share this comfort and encouragement with those you serve. God is our refuge and our strength every day and in every way. He is walking with us in the valleys as well as on the mountain tops. We serve Him from a position of faith and hope and not fear.

We want you to know that we at the Home Office care deeply for you and the members you serve. If we can be of help to you, let us know. Meanwhile you remain in our prayers.

We also covet your prayers for decisions that must be made related to GCI events in 2020. We have postponed regional celebrations scheduled for April in Africa until 2021 to protect members who would have travelled and potentially been exposed to COVID-19. We look forward to celebrating and learning with the African brethren, and we trust God will provide another time to meet face to face.

We are closely monitoring the spread of COVID-19 and government advisories related to travel and public gatherings. We will make additional announcements as necessary about other events planned for this year. Thank you for your prayers related to these decisions and the safety of our brethren wherever they live.

We encourage you to carefully consider your safety and the safety of those you serve in making decisions about your local meetings and events. If you have questions or concerns, please speak with your Regional Director.

With love and concern and resting in the strength of our Savior,

Greg Williams, President

Mat Morgan, CFO

PS. As a reminder, please find below an "updated" message sent earlier this week regarding precautions related to COVID-19.

Dear Pastors,

Some have asked about what to do considering the COVID-19. Please see the following link from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the government agency tasked with managing and communicating regarding outbreaks of this nature <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/prevention-treatment.html>. We suggest that you follow CDC recommended precautions and procedures.

We also recommend that you consider how best to provide a safe environment at your specific place of worship. Please remember that we may have seniors, children and others who may be more susceptible to infection and take steps to protect all attendees. Consider the following:

1. In some areas, especially in our larger urban areas where we gather, consider staying home for a week at a time as necessary while the situation is being monitored. If there has been an outbreak of the virus in your area, and/or authorities advise cancellation of the worship service and other related meetings this is the best option to protect everyone.
2. This is an opportunity to use technology. Consider having small groups, leadership teams or prayer groups meet via video conferencing (many of our pastors use the Zoom platform). **Please also remind members that the financial needs of your church continue, even if worship services need to be postponed. This is a great time to encourage members to explore the text-to-give options that were made available last year and other online giving options that are available at <https://www.gci.org/online-giving/>. The “Give to Grace Communion” box on this link has a drop down menu that allows donors to give to their local congregation.**

In places where we are meeting:

3. We are a friendly, hugging family of believers. You should instruct members to maintain more social distance than usual during this time, using elbow to elbow handshakes or fist bumps until this virus has passed.
4. Encourage members who don't feel well to stay home for the benefit of all. If members know they have met an infected person, they should quarantine themselves according to CDC guidelines.
5. Provide hand cleaning and sanitizing options at your place of worship.
6. Using pre-packaged communion elements may be a better option for the current crisis. Ministers and others handling the eucharist elements should always wash their hands and use hand sanitizer and/or protective gloves when preparing these for consumption. Avoid situations where the bread and wine are handled and shared by multiple people during the service.
7. Those who count the offerings should clean hands thoroughly after completing their work.

Thank you for taking these precautions as a natural part of loving our neighbors as ourselves.

With appreciation,

Grace Communion International

Home Office