



NORTHEASTERN CONFERENCE

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***FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE***  
***A STATEMENT REGARDING COVID19 DEVELOPMENTS***

**To: NEC Pastors, First Elders, Clerks & Communication Secretaries**  
**From: Daniel Honore, President**  
**Re: Coronavirus Statement to our Churches**  
**Date: March 13, 2020**

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Over the past few days we have been flooded with calls of concern seeking guidance as to how we as a Conference should proceed with our mission in light of the spreading coronavirus pandemic. It appears that everyone has an idea on the spectrum of opinion ranging from indifference on one end, to utter panic on the other. Moments of crisis require level headed thoughtfulness and prudence in making balanced decisions.

Given our moral responsibility to promote and protect the well-being of our work, we are compelled to study every angle, and make decisions that will result in the greatest good for our Conference without jeopardizing its mission or endangering its people. In that sense, we seek the greatest good for the greatest number. In all decisions and resulting actions we invoke the divine wisdom of the Almighty God. We make this a matter of continual prayer.

In analyzing the present situation, there are fundamental factors that we must take into consideration. First, the Northeastern Conference is a large and complex organization operating in five states and multiple jurisdictions. Its daily operations can be broken down into four major areas, with each area necessitating its own response. These areas include:

- 1) The local church with over two hundred congregations ministering to the needs of 60,000 members.
- 2) Our education system operates sixteen schools seeking to prepare our youth for the present society and the world to come.
- 3) Our campground in Hyde Park strives to meet the spiritual, social and recreational needs of our constituents.
- 4) Our Conference Office serves as the operational headquarters, overseeing activities throughout our field.

The intricacies of this Conference defy a simple one-size- fits-all approach. We must look at each geographical and operational area of our Conference and respond to its existing realities.

In light of these conditions we take the following actions over the next 30 days:

- 1) All Conference-wide meetings, trainings and conventions are cancelled.
- 2) Camp Victory Lake will remain closed for the next 30 days.
- 3) Our schools are open and will follow the directions of local education, public health and civic officials. They will follow enhanced sanitation protocols.
- 4) The Conference Office remains open with enhanced sanitation protocols. We are formulating remote operational contingency plans in the event that we are prevented from opening in the near future.

Our main concern, however, is our churches.

Given the different conditions across our field and after prayerful consideration, we have elected not to order a wholesale shut down of every church in the Northeastern Conference. This, however, may change as conditions evolve.

We are delegating the decision to open or not to open, to local church leadership based on the conditions and public health directives in that particular community.

Our recommendation is that all auxiliary services of the church which require public gatherings be cancelled. This includes prayer meeting, AYS, Pathfinders etc. These gatherings may be carried out through streaming or teleconferencing or cancelled outright.

We direct all congregations to follow the orders of government officials as it relates to public assembly limits.

Presently, Governor Andrew Cuomo has placed an attendance cap of 500 on public meetings within the State of New York. Those churches opting to operate within New York must adhere to that limit.

Out of an abundance of caution, church potluck should be cancelled for the foreseeable future.

Vulnerable members of our community are strongly discouraged from attending services. This includes the elderly or anyone with cold, fever, coughing or flu-like symptoms.

As part of community services initiatives, a number of our churches serve meals to the less fortunate. We recommend that such meals be pre-packaged and distributed but not consumed on the premises. Volunteers who serve these ministries should take utmost sanitary precautions to protect themselves and those they serve.

Churches that opt to cancel Sabbath services are encouraged to stream a skeleton worship service and find ways of keeping in touch with its membership and promote online giving in order to remain financially viable.

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Given our historic commitment to freedom of conscience we respect the individual right and decision of every member to attend or refraining from attending Sabbath service without judging anyone's motives or convictions.

We anticipate that the disruptions created by the pandemic could adversely affect our financial stability. Accordingly, we appeal to all of our faithful stewards to sustain the local church and the world church through online giving.

We will continue to monitor the situation from week to week and seek to respond to changing circumstances in a responsible manner.

We claim the promises of our God. He says to us even today:

1 "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine.

2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you.

3 For I am the Lord your God."

Years from now, when we remember these days, may we be able to say that the Lord brought us through.

May He bless you and keep you.