Memo 2021.01.01
To: Pastors, Fellowship Coordinators, and Church Boards
Re: Revised Guidelines for Worship Gatherings, Meetings, and Church Offices

February 24, 2021, the NC Governor issued Executive Order #195, which eased certain restrictions on businesses and gatherings.

It is uncertain whether the downward trend in COVID-19 statistics will continue, or how the presence of new variants of the virus may impact our communities. Until greater numbers of people are vaccinated we must all continue to take every precaution to prevent the spread of this disease which has taken the lives of over half a million Americans.

Based on the Executive Order, the Provincial Elders’ Conference has modified its guidelines for worship and other church gatherings as follows:

- The PEC continues to strongly recommend that congregations and fellowships follow the “mass gatherings” directives set by the Governor, which have been revised to permit gatherings of up to 25 people indoors, and up to 50 people outdoors (EO 195, Sect. 5.1)
- This recommendation is especially emphasized for NC Counties which are in the red or orange zones as found in the NC DHHS COVID-10 County Alert System report. Please consult the updated list, below.
- For congregations and fellowships located in counties which are in the yellow zone, or are absolutely certain (with a written and rehearsed plan) that they are able to meet the standards set in the NC DHHS Interim Guidance for Places of Worship and Religious Services, the PEC strongly recommends that worship gatherings be limited to the Emergency Maximum Occupancy of a facility or room being used for such meetings. This would be whichever is the lowest number produced by applying the following tests:
   - For indoor spaces, the lesser of the following limits:
     a. Thirty percent (30%) of the stated fire capacity for each building, room, or other indoor space where people gather. This limit applies separately to each room within a building. For rooms or spaces without a stated fire capacity, the limit is seven (7) people per one thousand (1000) square feet, rounded up.
     b. Two hundred fifty (250) people in any particular indoor room or other confined indoor space within the facility’s premises.
   - For outdoor spaces:
     Thirty percent (30%) of the stated fire capacity for each outdoor space. For rooms or spaces without a stated fire capacity, the limit is seven (7) people per one thousand (1000) square feet, rounded up.
For all gatherings, indoors or out:

- A registration process should be in place to ensure that the Emergency Maximum Occupancy is not exceeded.
- A roster of those in attendance should be kept so that contact tracing may be done as may be needed.
- Social distancing (at least 6 feet) must be maintained other than for members of the same household.
- Face coverings should be worn at all times by everyone present (following NC recommendations).

- In addition to what is stated above, the PEC strongly recommends the following:
  - Church staff work from home as much as possible. Other than paid or volunteer staff with specific essential responsibilities, members should not be inside church facilities, except for worship services under the above guidelines.
  - Church offices remain closed to visitors, apart from those engaged in essential activities (such as needed vendor visits, maintenance and repairs).
  - Congregational or choir singing, and large-group bands remain discontinued until further notice. (See note, below).
  - Gatherings for youth and children’s activities continue to meet “virtually”, or outdoors with no more than 25 people, observing social distancing and with face coverings.
  - In-person fellowship gatherings (meals, coffee hour, etc.) should remain suspended.
  - Church meetings (boards, committees, Bible studies, fellowship groups) should as much as possible continue to use technology to meet remotely. If there is a decision to have in person meetings, these should involve no more than 25 people, following all necessary precautions (The Three W’s, proper sanitation, exit and entry plans, etc.)
  - People at high risk (age 65 years or older, and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions) stay home and travel only for absolutely essential purposes.
  - When leaving home, remember the Three Ws:
    - Wear a cloth face covering.
    - Wait six feet apart. Avoid close contact.
    - Wash your hands often or use hand sanitizer.

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1 Singing or playing instruments outdoors may not be as risky as indoors, but the virus particles are tiny, linger in the air, and can travel for long distances even on a very light breeze. Bands should be limited to no more than 4 to 5 players, facing the same direction, 6 to 8 feet apart from one another; if outdoors, make sure no one is downwind from the band. Lower-risk musical activities could include hand bells (a small group, masked, physically distanced, gloved, and not sharing bells; Orff instruments; a solo singer (distanced from any accompanist); stringed instruments (players masked). In place of congregational hymns, have a soloist sing, or the organist play the hymn while someone reads the words aloud.
Data From
NC Dept. of Health and Human Services
COVID-19 County Alert System Report
February, 22, 2021

The most recent Report (Feb. 22), including the data on which it is based may be found in full [HERE](#).

NC counties where there are Moravian congregations are listed below:

- Catawba - **red** New Hope
- Davidson – **red** Enterprise, Community Fellowship
- Davie – **orange** Macedonia
- Guilford – **orange** First Greensboro, Moravia
- Mecklenburg – **orange** Little Church, New Beginnings, Peace
- New Hanover – **yellow** Covenant
- Rockingham – **orange** Leakesville, Mayodan
- Stokes – **red** Fulp, King
- Surry – **red** Grace
- Wake – **orange** Raleigh