



MORAVIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA, SOUTHERN PROVINCE

Provincial Elders' Conference

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Memo 2021.03.12

To: Pastors and Church Boards

Re: Congregation Councils

March 1, the PEC published Revised Guidelines for Worship Gatherings, Meetings and Church Offices. Please refer to that Memo for updated recommendations about the maximum number of people participating in indoor and outdoor church gatherings.

Most congregations have either delayed the 2020 annual Congregation Council into this year, or have held modified, abbreviated councils.

This memo provides guidance and options for congregations about holding a Congregation Council. What follows is general advice that will need to be measured against your congregation's Rules and Regulations.

Congregation Council

A Congregation Council should be planned to allow the greatest participation by the members. The Rules and Regulations of most congregations require advance notice(s) of meetings.

Given the current status of virus activity, vaccination distribution, and considering that the age of more than one-third of our members places them at increased risk, **the PEC recommends that a Congregation Council be limited to only essential actions such as election of board members and approval of budgets (if required of a Council).**

Size of Gatherings

Please consult the full contents of the March 1, PEC Memo. Church boards have several options regarding the size of congregational gatherings:

- You may choose to follow the “mass gatherings” directives set by the NC Governor in [Executive Order # 195](#): up to **25 people indoors, and up to 50 people outdoors**, with social distancing, face coverings, sanitation, etc. Note: This is strongly recommended by the PEC, and especially emphasized for NC counties which are in the red or orange zones as found in the [NC DHHS COVID-19 County Alert System](#) report. Please consult the updated list, below.
- If your congregation is in a county which is in the **yellow zone**, or you are absolutely certain (with a written and rehearsed plan) that you are able to meet the standards set in the [NC DHHS Interim Guidance for Places of Worship and Religious Services](#), a gathering could be up to **30% of the stated fire capacity** for the indoor room or outdoor space. For spaces without a stated fire capacity, the limit is seven (7) people per 1,000 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).

Options for Congregation Council

Based on Church Board(s) decisions about gatherings and group size (above), there are several options for holding a Congregation Council.

Online

The PEC has waived – for the period of the pandemic – the presumption that Congregation Councils are to be conducted in-person (physically present in the meeting). The Church Board(s) could announce and hold a Council meeting via technology (Zoom, or other video conferencing platforms).

For an online Council, you would need to have a way to verify that those attending, participating, and voting are, in fact, communicant members of the congregation. Depending on the technology, voting may be carried out using tools provided in the conferencing platform.

In Person

A physically in-person Council could be conducted **outdoors** in a pavilion or parking area, following the “30% of fire capacity” guidelines, above. A Council could also meet **indoors**, following those same guidelines. Factors to consider are: 1) the required quorum (Does it fit within the 30% ?), and 2) are you fully prepared to follow the requirements described in the [NC DHHS Interim Guidance for Places of Worship and Religious Services](#), and the steps for all gatherings (listed above) would need to be followed. .

Note that a registration process is essential to ensure that the Emergency Maximum Occupancy is not exceeded. If technology was available, more than one room in a church facility could be used so that maximum occupancy is not exceeded.

Hybrid

Depending on technology and facilities, it may be possible to hold a Congregation Council with some gathering physically in-person, and others joining the meeting via video conferencing or other technology. This option may pose challenges in how to include everyone and conduct discussion and voting.

Please contact the PEC office if you have questions, need information, or would like to consult about plans for a Congregation Council.

**Data From
NC Dept. of Health and Human Services
COVID-19 County Alert System Report**

March 4, 2021

The most recent Report (Mar. 4) 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 - **orange** New Hope
- Davidson – **yellow** Enterprise, Community Fellowship
- Davie – **orange** Macedonia
- Forsyth – **yellow** Advent, Ardmore, Bethabara, Bethania, Bethesda, Calvary, Christ, Clemmons, Fairview, Friedberg, Friedland, Fries Memorial, Home, Hope, Hopewell, Immanuel New Eden, Kernersville, Konnoak Hills, Messiah, Mizpah, New Philadelphia, Oak Grove, Olivet, Pine Chapel, Providence, Rural Hall, St. Philips, Trinity, Union Cross, Unity

- Guilford – **yellow** First Greensboro, Moravia
- Mecklenburg – **yellow** Little Church, New Beginnings, Peace
- New Hanover – **yellow** Covenant
- Rockingham – **orange** Leaksville, Mayodan
- Stokes – **yellow** Fulp, King
- Surry – **red** Grace
- Wake – **orange** Raleigh