

SHENANDOAH DISTRICT CORONAVIRUS RESPONSE GUIDELINES

BACKGROUND

During the past several months the Coronavirus has moved front and center into our consciousness. Beginning in China, it has spread to many other places, including the United States. We hope and pray for the well-being and health for all. However, because of the uncertainty of how this virus will spread and its impact on communities we felt it advisable to devise some guidelines for congregations and the continuing function of the District Office and facilities. At the Thursday, March 12, meeting of the District Leadership Team the following guidelines were approved.

The District Leadership Team understands that some congregations have already enacted policies in keeping with their best practices. The following guidelines are not intended to supplant but to provide guidance as decisions continue to be made. Congregations need to be attuned to local conditions and practices which could influence their decisions. In addition, we know that individuals will vary in their approach of how to participate in congregational life during this time. We encourage caution and safe practices in line with the guidelines attached from Brethren Disaster Ministries.

DISTRICT CORONAVIRUS MANAGEMENT TEAM

The District Coronavirus Management Team will consist of the District Executive Minister, Camp Brethren Woods Director, Camp Brethren Woods Assistant Director, District Leadership Team Chairperson, the moderator and moderator elect. The purpose of this team is two-fold.

- This Team will serve as a recommending/information clearinghouse body to District congregations in response to the Coronavirus. The District Coronavirus Management Team will monitor school systems in the Shenandoah District. In addition, the Management Team will be in consultation with a variety of individuals and institutions skilled in specific arenas affecting Coronavirus management. All releases will be vetted by legal counsel prior to release. If school districts close in your county that will automatically enact a recommendation from the District that all congregational activities be suspended, including Sunday morning worship. We will monitor government agencies, both local and state, for any mandated quarantines. Information that will inform decision making will be public and accessible.
- This team will oversee District Office protocol and procedures during this time and be responsible for assistance in enacting the proposed guidelines.

RESPONSE TO CORONAVIRUS CONGREGATIONS

Congregational Suspension of Worship and Activities Due to Coronavirus

The District Coronavirus Management Team will monitor school systems in the Shenandoah District. If school districts close in your area that will automatically enact a recommendation from the District Management Team that all congregational activities be suspended, including Sunday worship.

Check list for Congregations

1. Which individuals or team(s) will be charged with making decisions on behalf of the congregation?
2. What kinds of mechanisms will be used to ensure care for the elderly and infirm?

- a. Development of a contact list of elderly, complete with pertinent contact information
 - b. Phone trees, assigning congregational members the task of checking on the welfare of specific individuals
 - c. Safety checks
3. How will the congregation be kept abreast of congregational news/updates?
 4. Which individual or group is responsible for the finances e.g., signing checks, transferring of monies

District Office Response to Congregational Needs

The District Office will enact a support system involving contact persons in each section of the District. The Congregational Care Team will be responsible for checking in with these key people to see what kinds of broader help might be needed. Especially important is the welfare of caretakers, including pastors. The Congregational Care Team stands ready to check in with individual congregations as needed.

We recognize that not all congregations have equal resources. We desire to ensure that resources are available to those who need them, and a mechanism is in place for their distribution.

In addition, each of our congregations is part of a neighborhood. We ask congregations to be alerted to needs in your community and share those needs with the larger body if additional assistance is needed.

DISTRICT OFFICE

The plan aims to ensure essential services and activities can continue during a period when the District Office may be forced to close due to the Coronavirus. The best way to control the spread of a virus is to limit contact with others who may be infected. To protect the staff and others during this outbreak, the District Office will be closed to all staff, upon the closure of the Augusta County School system, except for the District Executive Minister and the Office Manager (on a limited basis)

District Office Staff

Current technology allows some of the essential tasks to be performed from the staff's home. Tasks that can be performed from home should be performed from home. Allowances should be made for the staff to be unavailable to perform their duties due to illness or caring for those that are ill. The current policy concerning sick days will be followed and adjusted as necessary per action from the District Leadership Team.

Communications

The Shenandoah District Executive will be the spokesperson for the District. In the event the District Executive is not available, the District Leadership Team Chair will assume this responsibility.

Information that needs to be communicated includes:

- Public Health Services Alerts and Recommendations
- Congregational Information
- District Office Information
- Denominational Information
- Congregational Information

Method of disseminating this information includes:

- Shenandoah District website

- Email
- Social Media
- Local Media – TV, Radio and Newspaper
- Telephone

Financial Considerations

During an office closure, the District must continue to meet certain financial obligations, including the payment of utilities and staff. The financial support of individual congregations may be impacted due to cancellations of worship and offering collections

Two Month Procedure Assuming no Income

The District has funds that will allow it to operate with normal accounting and financial procedures for two months. In addition, we have a \$17,000 reserve fund in Brethren Benefit Trust that could be transferred to District checking during this time. This period will be entered upon the closure of congregational functions due to the spread of Coronavirus.

The District Executive, in consultation with the Director of Finances, will be in control of the district finances until the office closure is declared over and normal operation are resumed, or the two-month period ends with controls still in place. In such a case the Coronavirus Management Team will consult with the District Leadership Team regarding next steps.

Operations

The District Executive Minister will assure that financial obligations are met and will continue Pastoral Placement activities that can be performed via telephone and electronic means. Personal meetings with candidates and search committees will be avoided. The Shenandoah Update will continue to be published if time and resources allow. The District Executive Minister will use the available staff and resources to perform as many of the normal tasks of the District Office as possible.

RESUMPTION OF NORMAL ACTIVITIES

Once health officials announce the return to some form of normalcy, the District Coronavirus Management Team will meet to plan a systematic recovery of operations and staffing.