

Office of the Bishop

AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH - 11TH EPISCOPAL DISTRICT



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Co-workers and Friends of the Eleventh District,

As we prepare to re-enter our church facilities for in-person worship experiences and gatherings, we offer the attached guidelines with the prayer and hope that they will be fiercely observed and enforced. We are endeavoring to take every precaution to protect the physical health of the people who have entrusted so much of their lives to us in the exercise of their faith.

Some aspects of what we have been through over the past year and a half, due to the global pandemic, will be an enduring legacy — like offering optional hybrid or virtual worship experiences, online giving, and the culture and conduct of wakes and funerals.

So, with this missive, we are lifting the moratorium of in-person worship and gatherings inside our church facilities, effective Sunday, June 13, 2021. However, we are prepared to reintroduce the moratorium if there is any sign of our church sites becoming super-spreader venues resulting in sickness and, as we have learned, potential death.

In consultation with officers and members, some pastors are opting to postpone the re-entry option. This is perfectly permissible. It is the prerogative of the pastor in consultation with the membership to delay re-entry. There are many factors to consider: the median age of the membership, the number of people vaccinated, available resources to deep clean the facilities, the purchase of hand-sanitizing stations and hand-held thermometers, and consideration for the relative size of the congregation in the short-term. Remember, safety is our objective, which must include the mental and spiritual comfortability of those who frequent our churches. "Science and sense" has been our mantra. In that regard, it is equally important to consider the number of persons in both church and community who have been vaccinated. The latest information is that a mere nine (9) percent of Black people have received the vaccine.

Please slow-read through the attached document. While we believe it is thorough, we do not claim that it is exhaustive. These are minimum standards and requirements. Each church and pastor will be held accountable for having decided to ignore these guidelines.

Let me use this space to express appreciation to the pastors and congregations who diligently sought to observe the moratorium. The Supervisor and I are grateful. Though we have no way to scientifically prove it, we are certain that it was a measure that saved many lives.

We also want to thank the Eleventh District Health Commission, under the leadership of Dr. Penny Ralston, for the thoughtful, labor intensive document produced. They have utilized science-based recommendations and have consulted with the materials developed by the Connectional Health Commission, led by Bishop Harry L. Seawright, Dr. Miriam Burnett, et al.

The Doors of the Church are Open!

Yours for Good Health,

Adam J. Richardson, Jr.

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Bishop

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