

**UPDATED RECOMMENDATION ON WORSHIP GATHERINGS**  
**July 31, 2020**

**Dear Mid-Atlantic Sisters and Brothers,**

**The district has been asked to provide a recommendation regarding worship gatherings for the next few months. The recommendation is that worship services be held virtually.**

**Mid-Atlantic is a high-risk area.**

**It is not safe to reenter the building. There remains much that is not yet understood about transmission of COVID-19, and how ventilation figures in transmission.**

**Having said that virtual worship remains best practice, if you are going to meet in person, the next couple of months provide perhaps the best window for outdoor gatherings. If you do gather outdoors:**

**One-hour limit.**

**Persons should maintain ten (10) feet of distance between each other.**

**Face coverings should be worn; nose and mouth should be covered.**

**Don't sing. Singing more forcibly expels virus droplets.**

**The church should be locked so that bathrooms cannot be used.**

**There should be corporate understanding prior to meeting of what will happen if persons do not or will not follow these rules.**

**If you're going to meet in person, you might plan to add an evening vesper service once or twice a month to virtual worship.**

**We recognize and empathize with how hard this time is for people and our congregations. We also affirm God's grace and power to bring good out of the worst situations, and we see some of that happening as congregations connect with more and new people online than they did inhouse, and as members "reach out" to and support each other more intentionally than pre-COVID-19.**

**We continue to be guided by scripture's and Paul's admonition, "Do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others" (Phil 2:4, NASB). We make this recommendation because of the love and concern we have for each other.**

**Expect an update in early October.**

**Together on the Journey,**

**Mid-Atlantic District Executive Minister Gene Hagenberger and the Mid-Atlantic Leadership Team**

**(I'm indebted to Dr. Kathryn Jacobsen, a member of our Oakton COB and Professor of Epidemiology and Global Health at George Mason University, for sharing with me her expertise about this COVID-19 pandemic, and advising and helping me understand how our congregations and members might best care for each other and our neighbors during this time.)**