

March 14, 2020

Dear Cobb and Douglas County Religious Leaders,

The world is grappling with an issue of enormous scale and human impact, and our hearts go out to all who have been affected by the outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19). Not only is this a global concern, it's affecting our own community and your congregation's health and safety are our utmost concern. We are continuing to see an increase in the number of individuals testing positive for COVID-19 in our state and especially Cobb County. The President of the United States and Governor Kemp have both declared states of emergency so that we can more rapidly deal with the issues at hand.

In order to support the goal of immediately reducing exposure in our community, **we are asking our religious leaders to heed the Governor's recommendation and strongly consider suspending face-to-face group activities for at least the next two weeks.** We know that this is a tremendous burden on your agencies and on your individual members, but it is critical if we are to slow the progress of this disease and protect the health of your members. We know that many have already taken this action and we appreciate your leadership.

As you decide to suspend group activities, we ask you to remind your members of two additional points:

- 1) The purpose of suspending religious group activities is to contribute to the social distancing goal to reduce disease exposure. Families should also adhere to these recommendations and keep their family members home from other places with large gatherings of people. This will help tremendously as we all work together to slow the transmission of this disease.
- 2) Special consideration should be given to communicating with your vulnerable populations in your congregations, including older adults and others with access and functional needs. Encourage those you serve to seek out a "buddy" who will check on and help care for them if they get sick.

Cobb & Douglas Public Health, along with our County partners, wants to assure everyone that we are working tirelessly to protect your health and wellbeing. Visit CobbandDouglasPublicHealth.org or <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/index.html> for more information.

Sincerely,

Janet Memark, MD, MPH, FACP
District Health Director