



Community of Christ

CHRIST'S MISSION, OUR MISSION

First Presidency Updated Statement Response to COVID-19 Virus

20 March 2020

The First Presidency is extending the recommended suspension of church gatherings around the world through at least Friday, 1 May 2020. Church gatherings are worship services, meals, conferences, funerals, and other group activities. The Presidency continues to monitor guidance from government and public health agencies around the globe related to the estimated spread and duration of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, if local government and public health guidance is more restrictive than the Presidency's recommendation, follow local guidance. As new information is available it will be released and posted at www.CofChrist.org/covid-19.

As a reminder, the Presidency bases its recommendation on the following principles:

1. The church's response should emphasize **preventative**, rather than reactive, strategies to keep the COVID-19 virus from spreading as quickly as many infection-rate models indicate.
2. A primary **prevention** strategy is "social distancing." The World Health Organization advises: "Maintain at least 1 metre (3 feet) distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing." According to the USA Centers for Disease Control, social distancing involves "remaining out of congregant settings, avoiding mass gatherings, and maintaining distance" between people whenever possible. Social distancing is especially challenging for people in church settings.
3. The church's response should emphasize "protecting the most vulnerable" (Doctrine and Covenants 164:6a) in our congregations, cities, towns, and villages. This includes our senior members and those already affected by other health challenges.

Historic sites will remain closed to the public through at least Friday, 1 May 2020. Based on guidance provided by the Independence, Missouri, USA mayor, the Temple Complex, including the Peace Pavilion, will remain closed to the public with all events canceled through at least Friday, 15 May 2020. Headquarters staff at all sites continue to support operations, but staff presence in the offices is limited to maximize social distancing. Reopening all sites to the public will continue to be evaluated as the situation unfolds.

Social distancing can cause us to feel isolated from each other and God. We are grateful for the many ways people are staying "connected" and supporting each other in living Christ's mission while upholding the strategy of social distancing. "Who will separate us from the love of Christ? ...neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:35, 38 NRSV).

As you connect and support each other through the Lenten journey into Holy week and then the Easter season, we ask you to remember that your congregation, mission center, campgrounds, and World Church have financial responsibilities even though we are not physically gathering. Please use online giving (www.CofChrist.org/give) or mail in contributions to support Local and Worldwide Mission Tithes.

The First Presidency