

**Fifth Episcopal District**  
**The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church**  
**P. O. Box 13383 Birmingham, AL 35202**



**PASTORAL GUIDANCE FROM BISHOP TERESA JEFFERSON-  
SNORTON IN VIEW OF THE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)**

**Wednesday, March 18, 2020**

Presiding Elders, Pastors and Members of the Fifth Episcopal District:

As this Coronavirus pandemic continues to unfold, we find ourselves in strange territory. Now is the time to **exercise wisdom while standing in faith**. Please share this with your pastors and congregations, by email or via a conference call or however you best communicate:

**1. Worship Services**

- Strongly recommend no in-person worship services or onsite church gatherings at least through April 4th. Follow all restrictions of local, state and federal government. We will advise and update this before April 4th. We do not need to assume liability for spreading the virus and making others sick.
- Worship services and other meetings like bible study can be live-streamed or webcast or conducted by conference call. If this is new for you, you can find help at this website: <https://thecmechurch.org/2020/03/online-technology-ministry-resources/> .
- PASTORS, reach out and engage with your members as much as possible via phone, text, Facebook, etc. during this time.

**2. Church Finances**

- Pastors and Steward Boards should immediately determine and publicize options on receiving tithes/offerings electronically, via mail or other means. This site has links to a variety of on-line giving options if you need help. <https://thecmechurch.org/2020/03/online-technology-ministry-resources/>
- Pastors should still receive their salary, unless adjustments need to be made, in which case this should be a decision through the proper channels as outlined in the Book of Discipline. *(This is why pastors need to be engaged, so members know that a salary is for more than the weekly sermon).*
- Churches who may experience hardship paying mortgages and other bills, should immediately contact your bank, lender or whoever you owe to work out payment arrangements. Do NOT just NOT pay bills and mess up the church's credit reputation.

- Please continue to support your district and region with regular payments of designated assessments, so we can maintain our business operations as well. Please consult with your presiding elder as needed, rather than ignore this commitment.
- This is a time to have faith that no matter what happens, God will provide.

### **3. Pastoral Care and Outreach**

- As mentioned earlier, pastors should make extra efforts to connect with members as often as possible.
- Please follow hospital guidelines regarding visitation of your hospitalized members. If you cannot visit the patient, you can be in touch with them through family members.
- Funerals should be arranged in consultation with the funeral home and local health authorities. If services are held, attendance should be limited to the immediate family. No repasts or meals should be served at the church until further notice. Instead, the church may want to provide the family with a catered meal or with the funds to feed the family.
- Please consider all opportunities to use the church building to distribute meals or other aid.
- Please set up a means to assure that your senior citizens and children are safe, healthy and have food. This includes those who are members of the local church as well as those in the community!

4. District and Regional meetings should be postponed if they were to be before Easter. This includes District Conferences. The status of meetings schedule after April 12<sup>th</sup> should be determined by the beginning of April.

5. Quarterly Conferences should be conducted by conference call or video-conference or rescheduled for a later date.

6. No decision has been made about the June Connectional Youth and Young Adult Conference (CYYAC). We will let you know as soon as a decision is made, but that may be several weeks away. The same is true for our July Annual Conferences.

7. Your personal health and spiritual well-being are important. Protect yourself with hand-washing, sanitizing and social distancing. Anyone can get the virus, even believers and good Christians! PRAYER, Bible reading and personal meditation are great ways to alleviate the natural fears and frustrations that are a part of our daily life now.

8. BE INFORMED. Read about what Coronavirus is and what it is not. Watch the news. Be aware of misinformation, scams and schemes. Check all sources to be sure you are getting correct information. Some good information is on the CME Church website:

**<https://thecmechurch.org/2020/03/coronavirus-guidelines-emergency-and-pandemic-preparedness/>**

In love and faith,

Bishop Teresa Jefferson-Snorton