

Grand Master Coronavirus (COVID-19) Directive

March 13, 2020

I firmly believe in the autonomy of our institutions and the importance of letting our leaders lead. To that end, **effective immediately, Masonic activities within the jurisdiction may proceed**, provided the presiding officer determines it is the prudent and responsible thing to do.

To each individual in position to make such a decision, **I strongly urge you to monitor the spread of the coronavirus**, particularly in your community and surrounding area, and to **put the health and wellbeing of your members above all else**. To that end, **all non-essential Masonic meetings and activities are hereby suspended or cancelled thru April 30th or until further notice.**

An essential meeting is a once a month meeting to transact the business of the organization to include paying bills, collecting dues and to hold elections. When possible only have the required officers necessary to conduct business to meet. Utilize teleconference calls where possible.

A non-essential meeting includes meetings to perform degree work, townhalls, fundraisers, mentoring events, etc.. Utilize teleconference calls if needed.

Make sure the meeting place is properly sanitized to include furnishings and lavatories.

It is imperative that we quickly, clearly, and decisively communicate this message to the Craft. With the benefit of time and further consultation with leaders from inside and outside the fraternity, we are afforded the opportunity to refine the decision and the implications it has on our members, lodges, and appendant bodies.

I highly recommend that you educate yourself on the facts about the virus. Attached is a **COVID-19 Factsheet**. Also included is a letter that should be given to your subordinate house and officers: "**Advice for Churches from the Surgeon General: Preparing Your Church for Coronavirus**" Although it was written for churches, it is appropriate for our organization.

This announcement is subject to further revisions as the situation dictates. Grand Lodge will monitor developments daily.

Take due notice thereof and govern yourself accordingly.

Fraternally yours,

Wilbert M. Curtis

Wilbert M. Curtis, Grand Master
MWP HGL of Texas and Jurisdiction

COVID-19 Factsheet



What you need to know about coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)

What is coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)?

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. The virus that causes COVID-19 is a novel coronavirus that was first identified during an investigation into an outbreak in Wuhan, China.

Can people in the U.S. get COVID-19?

Yes. COVID-19 is spreading from person to person in parts of the United States. Risk of infection with COVID-19 is higher for people who are close contacts of someone known to have COVID-19, for example healthcare workers, or household members. Other people at higher risk for infection are those who live in or have recently been in an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19. Learn more about places with ongoing spread at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/transmission.html#geographic>.

Have there been cases of COVID-19 in the U.S.?

Yes. The first case of COVID-19 in the United States was reported on January 21, 2020. The current count of cases of COVID-19 in the United States is available on CDC's webpage at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-in-us.html>.

How does COVID-19 spread?

The virus that causes COVID-19 probably emerged from an animal source, but is now spreading from person to person. The virus is thought to spread mainly between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet) through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It also may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads. Learn what is known about the spread of newly emerged coronaviruses at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/transmission.html>.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Patients with COVID-19 have had mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms of

- fever
- cough
- shortness of breath

What are severe complications from this virus?

Some patients have pneumonia in both lungs, multi-organ failure and in some cases death.

How can I help protect myself?

People can help protect themselves from respiratory illness with everyday preventive actions.

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.

If you are sick, to keep from spreading respiratory illness to others, you should

- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

What should I do if I recently traveled from an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19?

If you have traveled from an affected area, there may be restrictions on your movements for up to 2 weeks. If you develop symptoms during that period (fever, cough, trouble breathing), seek medical advice. Call the office of your health care provider before you go, and tell them about your travel and your symptoms. They will give you instructions on how to get care without exposing other people to your illness. While sick, avoid contact with people, don't go out and delay any travel to reduce the possibility of spreading illness to others.

Is there a vaccine?

There is currently no vaccine to protect against COVID-19. The best way to prevent infection is to take everyday preventive actions, like avoiding close contact with people who are sick and washing your hands often.

Is there a treatment?

There is no specific antiviral treatment for COVID-19. People with COVID-19 can seek medical care to help relieve symptoms.



CS 314937-A 03/03/2020

For more information: www.cdc.gov/COVID19

Advice for Churches from the Surgeon General: Preparing Your Church for Coronavirus

The Surgeon General's advice for churches: good hygiene, and it's time to "limit touching, especially hand-to-hand."

Don't panic... Stop buying masks... Wash your hands.

And, stop shaking hands in church.

All of those were part of a conversation this morning with Surgeon General Jerome Adams. A small group of faith-based leaders met with Adams to talk about how the faith-based community might respond to the spread of HIV/AIDS, with the reality that the states with the fastest-growing new incidents of HIV are states that are rural and more religious. Surgeon General Adams talked much about the role faith-based communities have in public health, sharing some of his own story. Furthermore, the administration has been engaging in issues of the opioid epidemic, mental health, and other major concerns.

Health should always be a priority for us. This may be true now than ever as we watch the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) spread its way through the globe—Hong Kong, Italy, Korea, and more. You can, in fact, find today's coronavirus facts on the World Health Organization's update page [here](#). As of today, there are over 90,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 globally, 64 of those being in the United States. (See updates for the U.S. [here](#).) Of course, compare this to over 18,000 people who have died of the flu this year so far.

However, because this virus is so new and many of us feel unprotected, our first response may be one of fear. Many Americans have in fact even been purchasing protective masks at such a rate that the Surgeon General wrote this in a recent [CNN op-ed piece](#):

Masks are not recommended for use by most Americans and hoarding of masks can actually hurt our response by reducing the supply available for medical professionals who need them. It's critically important our health providers have masks and other medical supplies when caring for people who have been exposed to the virus.

Protecting ourselves against disease is not a bad thing, and my stock of hand sanitizer is evidence that I'm a believer, but there are more basic precautions we can take as first measures.

So let's back up.

In fact, during our meeting this morning, the Surgeon General expressed that "the risk to any individual [American] is incredibly low." However, he cautioned that, "We can't hermetically seal the United States" and that the coronavirus task force is moving to a phase of seeking to "limit the spread of cases in the community."

He pointed out that other rapidly spreading diseases like SARS, MERS, and others were successfully addressed with “basic public health precautions” and emphasized that the most important thing a person can do is to “wash hands frequently.”

Perhaps you’ve seen the meme going around lately that reminds us all that even when we don’t have a global pandemic, we should wash our hands.

That’s sage advice.

Time for social distancing?

There are three ways governments are dealing with coronavirus right now and I believe all are important as researchers and health practitioners seek to better understand COVID-19: isolation, quarantine, and social distancing. For most of us, the first two are not very applicable and are aimed at specific individuals (though [Craig Groeschel and Bobby Gruenewald are currently quarantined](#)). But the latter is something that all of us would benefit from during the spread of this virus.

Social distancing, according to an [article on Vox](#), refers to “a slew of tactics meant to keep people from congregating in large crowds, to slow the spread of a virus.” According to the article:

Unlike quarantine and isolation, social distancing orders typically apply to whole communities, not specific individuals,” Lindsay Wiley, a health law professor at the Washington College of Law, explains in an email. These measures include postponing or canceling mass gatherings like sporting events, concerts, or religious gatherings. It could mean closing schools or encouraging telework.

Yes, postponing or cancelling church gatherings may or may not be on the horizon (and are already happening in some countries, but [also here in Washington state](#)).

However, for now, my takeaway from the meeting this morning was this: (1) hand sanitizer is not a bad thing and (2) our churches can be taking a few early preventative steps.

Here are three ways you can start preparing your church for Cononavirus:

First, communicate well with your church when it comes to your commitment to keep your people as healthy as possible.

This includes reminding your people that if they have any type of symptoms of coughing, sneezing, fever, nausea, achiness, or any flu-like symptom, to stay home. Remind them that you love them, but that you can see them next week if they are experiencing anything that may be contagious.

Second, reeducate your church staff and volunteers regarding good hygiene for all.

Especially those working with older and younger populations need to enforce the importance of hand-washing and good health practices with all those in your programs. Remind them that we need to be especially cautious of those who may have suppressed immune systems.

Finally, now might be a good time to (at least temporarily) modify routines that may threaten to spread disease.

For example, during the greeting time (if you have one), encourage people to simply say hello instead of shaking hands or hugging. (We used elbow bumps in our meeting this morning.) Already churches have been considering [altering their practices](#), and it appears to be time to increase those measures just a bit.

The Surgeon General emphasized that we will know a lot more "in a week or two" on how this will play out, and in some places "large public gatherings" such as church services may have to be restricted.

However, social distancing is something that should start happening now. I specifically asked if we should be limiting church activities like shaking hands. He responded, "It is prudent to limit touching, especially hand-to-hand."

So, for now, let's do all we can to run from fear and into good health practices that we should all be engaging in every day.

[Ed Stetzer](#) is executive director of the [Billy Graham Center](#), serves as a dean at Wheaton College, and publishes church leadership resources through [Mission Group](#). The Exchange team helped with this article.

The Exchange is a part of CT's [Blog Forum](#). Support the work of CT. [Subscribe](#) and get one year free.

The views of the blogger do not necessarily reflect those of Christianity Today.