



March 14, 2020

Dear Mason Faith Based Community:

In light of the rapidly expanding COVID-19 disease that has the potential to put many of our Mason residents in jeopardy, we are respectfully requesting that you **cancel any services, meetings or other gatherings that involve more than 10 individuals that are high risk** based on specific guidance from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Michigan's Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS). For this virus, the definition of "high risk" includes, but is not limited to, "older adults (over 60) and persons of any age with underlying medical conditions."

We have also been notified that the virus can survive on certain surfaces for up to nine days. This creates sanitation concerns for any place of gathering. To show our concern, we cancelled all public meetings for the next two weeks due to the number of high-risk participants both on our boards and commissions and visiting from the public. Further, the public can only enter our facilities by appointment for critical services.

Our highest priority is the health of our community and we truly believe the risk to our community could be devastating if these gatherings continue. The primary objective for all of us at this time is to slow the inevitable spread of the virus as much as possible. We know this can be a challenging time for our residents and we know their desire to meet and worship is a critical component of coping with the stress of this very serious situation. We would be willing to work with churches that do not have the ability to live stream their messages to coordinate with other churches with that capability. In addition, we may be able to offer use of city hall for live streaming and recording of a church message with significant limitation of the number of people involved and depending upon the availability of personnel to operate the recording equipment.

We are aware that the actions being suggested are unprecedented and may be perceived by some as extreme. We are reacting to public health professionals who believe that what we do, or don't do, over the next week will have a massive impact on the local and perhaps national trajectory of the virus spread. The experts tell us we must adopt a pandemic mitigation mindset through widespread, uncomfortable, and comprehensive social distancing. That means not only shutting down schools, work (as much as possible), group gatherings, and public events, but also making daily choices to stay away from each other as much as possible to minimize the number of severe cases.

Results from other parts of the world make clear that the risks posed by the virus are real and serious. The City of Mason is constantly assessing our operations to identify actions to reduce the impact of the virus. But we are keenly aware that this situation requires a community-wide response. Please feel free to contact either of us if you have questions regarding this letter or regarding other actions the city is taking in response to this public emergency.

Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Russell Whipple, Mayor

Deborah Stuart, City Manager