

South Atlantic Conference Response to COVID-19

Effective Tuesday, March 13, 2020, the South Atlantic Conference is adopting a virtual model of ministry and continues to join in the social and civic responsibility to help stop the spread of the coronavirus.

With this virtual model of ministry:

- We are following **county, state, and federal public health recommendations** in conjunction with denominational guidelines from the Southern Union Conference, North American Division, and General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.
- All 17 of our **K-12 schools** are now physically closed in favor of distance learning. This will continue through March 27, 2020, as we continue to evaluate information we receive.
- All 175 of our **churches, companies, and groups** will transition immediately to create and foster a virtual church community with no gatherings of 50 or more people (per public health guidelines) until further notice.
- South Atlantic Conference Office is transitioning to a **virtual office** starting Monday, March 23, 2020, with the physical building now closed to the public until further notice. (Phone messages, email and postal mail will be regularly checked.)
- All **springtime ministry meetings** are canceled or postponed and summertime meetings and gatherings are being evaluated (this includes camp meeting).
- **Community Service centers** may continue distributing food to those in need but must take extra steps in protecting the volunteers by adhering to the personal distance recommendation.
- Updated plans and recommendations will be evaluated as needed and will be shared.

The goal of these temporary organizational changes is to provide a buffer of protection to help slow the spread of COVID-19 in our communities. Each person should continue, as well, to follow the individual public health guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and healthcare professionals.

We are here as Seventh-day Adventist Christians to care for people by finding ways to meet spiritual, physical and emotional needs.

All leaders and members are encouraged to nurture a sense of community, both online and offline, in safe, appropriate and legal ways, during this time of containment, to meet people's needs.

1. **Our pastors** are working to find low-touch, high-impact ways to minister to people's spiritual and emotional needs. Our pastors and churches are quickly developing livestreaming plans, virtual small groups, eldercare buddy support, and online community networking.

2. **Our teachers** are transitioning to distance learning programs to help our scholars to continue having an academic advantage and complete their learning requirements. Our teachers are actively engaged in curriculum planning, distance or online student interaction, parent coaching, and grading.
3. **Our ministry leaders and directors** are developing new ways, beyond events, to nurture the life stages of faith, provide leadership coaching, inspire total member involvement, and foster spiritual growth.

As we move forward we need God's presence and blessing. We ask our members to:

- Commit to personal Bible study and prayer for our communities
- Commit to calling, texting, or emailing three people each day to nurture a sense of caring community
- Commit to safely checking in on your neighbors, the elderly, and the vulnerable in your church and community
- Please continue to safeguard your health and seek the healthcare assistance you may need.

May we be proactive and prayerful as we collectively take every day preventative public health actions to protect and safeguard the health and wellness of our communities.

William L. Winston, President