Public Health Guidance for Religious Services During the Holidays

Due to the ongoing spread of COVID-19, rising death toll and overload of the state’s critical care infrastructure, the Mississippi State Department of Health is making the following recommendations to limit transmission of COVID-19 throughout the holidays:

- Most transmission occurs from individuals who do not know that they are infected with COVID-19.
- Close contact with those outside the household is an important risk factor for contracting COVID-19.
- Although severe illness can occur at any age or state of health, death and severe illness are more frequent among those over 60 years of age or with chronic medical conditions.

**Primary Guidance:**
- Please avoid in-person services and provide virtual services only for congregation members.

**Secondary Guidance:**
For those unable to comply with elements depicted in the Primary Guidance above, please conform with the following guidance to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 and protect the most vulnerable:

- Due to the high risk of death and severe disease - please instruct the following congregants to avoid in-person services:
  - Those over 60 years of age
  - Those with the following medical conditions:
    - Severe hypertension
    - Diabetes
    - Heart disease
    - Obesity
    - Immunosuppression (weakened immune system for any reason)
- Conduct services outdoors, if possible.
- Shorten the duration of services as much as possible.
- Ensure attendees from different households maintain a distance of more than 6 feet from others.
- All attendees should wear a mask at all times.
- Attendees do not physically greet or come into contact with other attendees before, during or after services.
- Attendees should not sing.
- Choirs are high risk for spreading COVID-19. Using other forms of music or limit the number of singers (maintain more than 10 feet of distance from all others wearing a face covering).

We must all do our part to limit transmission of COVID-19. By limiting proximity to others, avoiding indoor gatherings, and wearing masks in public, Mississippians can save countless lives and preserve scarce healthcare resources.