



Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

My office has received many questions about the coronavirus (COVID-19) and how it affects us as a worshipping community. Many are questioning if we should cancel worship services. Governor DeWine has imposed a restriction on large gatherings of more than 100 people, there are however exceptions including religious gathering, because of 1<sup>st</sup> amendment rights. On that basis, I'm not inclined to encourage the cancellation of services. Common worship, which means showing up together in person, lies at the heart of our tradition. Reasonable precautions should be taken to lower the risk of infection at church, but to abandon gathering for worship, at least at this point, honors fear over faith. Of course, people can make their individual decisions about this.

A second priority is ministry to the weak, the poor, and the recovering. All efforts should be made not to cancel feeding programs, AA groups, and the like. We may need to adjust the way we do this to try and mitigate risk. An example would be sequential seating or carry out.

All other meeting certainly can be cancelled or postponed as the local leadership decides.

My staff has set up a [web page](#) with resources. It contains best practices for a sanitary worship service (including communion, the passing of the peace, and taking up the offering), information on streaming services, a tool for online giving, among other things. It is essential that you check this page often because resources will be added as needed. There is also a form on the page you can fill out with your questions so we know what additional resources you need.

Blessings,

The Rt. Rev. Thomas E. Breidenthal  
Bishop of Southern Ohio