

Bishop Holston: In-person worship and gatherings suspended through June 10; services may restart June 14

Bishop L. Jonathan Holston, resident bishop of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, released this statement regarding the latest guidance in response to the coronavirus outbreak in our state:

May 15, 2020

Friends, I continue to be inspired by the creative ways the churches of the South Carolina Conference have responded to the ongoing challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic. Your commitment to our mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world and your care for one another are evident in so many ways. South Carolina United Methodists are truly seeking a more excellent way – following God beyond the bounds of expectations.

In consultation with the Cabinet and according to the latest guidance from public health officials, I am strongly recommending that leaders of each local church continue to suspend in-person worship services, gatherings, meetings and events through June 10.

Worship and other in-person gatherings are allowed to resume beginning Sunday, June 14. The cabinet has outlined the safety concerns and guidelines for resuming in-person worship in a new resource called "[Reset | Restart | Renew](#)." These guidelines are the product of prayer, research, data analysis and many conversations with public health officials, church leaders and state leaders. Clergy and church leaders are strongly encouraged to use this document to navigate the transition to resuming in-person worship.

We have heard your desire to return in person to the communities of faith that shape your relationship with Jesus Christ. Even when the church doors are once again open and we can safely gather, this does not mean a return to business as usual. It is critical to recognize the importance of the safe and sanitary practices necessary once we return to church buildings.

Congregations are encouraged to care for one another as plans are made for resuming in-person worship and continuing remote worship opportunities. Some churches may opt to return in-person at a later date, depending on their context. We support you in making the best decisions for your congregation as you care for one another.

Moving day for those transitioning to new appointments will be Tuesday, June 30, 2020. This one-week delay allows time for in-person farewells and necessary sanitizing of parsonages.

We continue to monitor developments in the pandemic as we discern a new date for the 2020 Annual Conference session – postponed from June 7-10. Our priority in this and all decisions is ensuring the health and safety of South Carolina United Methodists.

In this interim time, I know you will remain steadfast in finding ways to remain in community with your sisters and brothers in Christ. Our regularly updated collection of resources to help local churches through this unprecedented time can be found at umcsc.org/coronavirus.

As people of faith who profess to follow Jesus Christ, we know that our call is to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. With ears open to hear how God is calling your congregation and hearts open to respond to that call, we embrace this opportunity to be a beacon of hope in a hurting world. We renew our commitment to faithfully participate in the life of our congregations through our prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness so that all may come to know and be transformed by the love, grace and mercy available through Jesus Christ.

I invite you to join me each morning – on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) and at umcsc.org – as we pray for those affected by the coronavirus, for those experiencing stress, anxiety and financial uncertainty, for medical professionals treating and caring for patients and for those working to ensure a healthier future for all of us.

Grace and peace,

L. Jonathan Holston
Resident Bishop