



**THIRD EPISCOPAL DISTRICT
AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

112 JEFFERSON AVENUE NO. 5, COLUMBUS, OH, 43213
OFFICE EMAIL: OFFICE@AME3.ORG - PHONE: 614-227-5812
FAX: 634-227-5825- WEBSITE: AME3.ORG

THE RIGHT REVEREND FRANK MADISON REID, III, PRESIDING BISHOP
MRS. MARLAA' M REID, EPISCOPAL SUPRVISOR

We've Got To Face It To Fix It: The Third District Is Committed to Stopping the Coronavirus by Any Means Necessary!

Dear Team Third,

We are living in extraordinary times. The Coronavirus and COVID-19 is a global pandemic that is changing the way we live. Some of these changes will stay with us long after the virus is curtailed. Remember, extraordinary times call for extraordinary leadership.

Team Reid is grateful and proud of our Team Third servant leadership group. Over the past couple of weeks all Team Third AME constituent groups have done a good job of having virtual worship, practicing good stewardship and serving the members and communities in Ohio, West Virginia and Western Pennsylvania. Thank you for being role models of Kingdom service, sacrifice and strength. Sadly, however in this pandemic environment, good is not good enough.

Unfortunately, because American leadership did not react early enough, strategically enough or courageously enough, the Coronavirus is spreading in the US like wildfire. The danger posed by COVID-19 is real:

1. We cannot say that we the Third Episcopal District of the AME Church is unaware of the clear danger of sickness and death from the virus.
2. We cannot say that we are unaware that the virus is transmitted from person to person.
3. We cannot deny that physical gatherings or meetings of any size promotes transmission of the virus.
4. We cannot deny that we have a duty to protect our members, their families and the communities in which they live.
5. We cannot deny that we have the authority to stop the unsafe physical gatherings and meetings.

Therefore, I am obliged to make the extraordinary decision to instruct churches throughout the entire Third Episcopal District to suspend in-person gatherings, including worship services until further notice. All Churches should use virtual means for assembling for worship, Bible Study, and church meetings. The sooner we face the this pandemic and make the hard decisions, the sooner we can join our Lord in fixing the broken lives, families and communities that will be left behind.

The purpose of these initiatives is to slow the spread of the Coronavirus. The healthcare system is already overwhelmed. If we do not control the infection rate, many more may die simply because the healthcare system will be unable to handle the influx of patients. As the Body of Christ, we must do our part to flatten the curve by any spiritual means necessary. Third District, in the words of the late great writer and a Civil Rights activist, James Baldwin, "we've got to face it to fix it!"

In addition to our moral obligation to practice the Law of a Liberating Love, failure to heed the warnings from healthcare professionals and government agencies regarding the risks posed by gatherings during this crisis can expose our churches to litigation and potential liability if persons attending our services/meetings/ministries contracts the virus. It is incumbent upon us to avoid potential spiritual and legal liability by asking our congregants not to attend church functions at which they could be exposed to this deadly virus.

Therefore:

1. No Sunday morning services, bible studies, meetings or any physical meetings and gatherings at the church building.
2. Virtual gatherings or meetings cannot consist of more than the Pastor or those members of his/her family who reside with him or her. This includes the persons operating the streaming equipment.
3. Pastors can conduct small graveside services while observing physical distancing guidelines. Some funeral homes have already adopted this model.
4. Starting April 1, 2020 until April 30, 2020 there will be a moratorium on weddings. If there is no substantial change in the growth and impact of the Coronavirus on our District and communities the moratorium may have to be extended.
5. If there are weddings scheduled at your church for May, June, July and August, please contact the couple and let them know that the church may not be able to host the wedding and give them the option to cancel the contract or wait and see how this pandemic plays out.
6. Ministry to the sick and shut-in must be achieved through virtual means rather than in-person.
7. In a separate communication, that will be circulated soon, we will provide additional guidance to churches engaged in outreach ministries, such as food pantries, that cannot be accomplished by virtual means.

Team Third, we are all in this Coronavirus storm together. A growing number of those dead are AME Pastors and members. Reports from other Christian denominations are equally deadly and dire. This is a test of our faithfulness, focus and commitment to Christ and His church. If we turn to each other, with Christ-like compassion and loving kindness, instead of turning on each other like critical backstabbers, the Third Episcopal District will emerge from this global pandemic stronger, wiser and better.

Finally, Supervisor Marlaa and I have been on Facebook Live and The Third District Facebook page twice a week encouraging, equipping and empowering Team Third to fight the good fight of faith. We have contacted a master teacher to do a virtual class for our Pastors and leaders on how to maximize their virtual presence and market their ministries so the financial burden of this pandemic is not

insurmountable. If we stay together we will discover we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us.

The Joy Of The Lord Is Our Strength,

Bishop Frank Madison Reid III

Supervisor Marlaa' M. Hall-Reid