



March 20, 2020

Dear Honored Morris County Religious Leaders,

On behalf of Morris County Police Chiefs' Association President Thomas Williver, Morris County Sheriff James M. Gannon and Morris County Prosecutor Fredric M. Knapp, we are advising you on two emergency orders designed to limit numbers of individuals at indoor and outdoor social gatherings so that the risk of community spread of COVID-19 is reduced.

Religious communities in Morris County worship on days throughout the week and some faiths will be celebrating and observing special holidays in March and April 2020, beyond their regular services.

Respectfully, we draw your attention to Governor Philip D. Murphy's Executive Order No. 104 and the Morris County Order Pursuant to a Declaration of Emergency. Both are attached and are in full effect until further notice.

Executive Order No. 104, in pertinent part, mandates that all gatherings of persons in New Jersey shall be limited to 50 people or fewer. There are some exclusions but they do not include houses of worship.

Secondly, the Declaration of Emergency, signed March 19, 2020, by Morris County Emergency Management Coordinator Scott DiGiralomo, closes all playgrounds, playing fields, indoor and outdoor recreational areas within Morris County.

Morris County parks may remain OPEN for passive recreation only, but NO organized or directed activity is permitted. Any other park activity that brings groups of more than four individuals together (other than family members) is prohibited.

As the orders state, the mandates are based upon medical conclusions that social distancing is an appropriate response to the public health hazard posed by Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

Sheriff Gannon wants the religious community to know: *While the Governor is directing that we, as a community, refrain from gathering physically, we would encourage you to continue to meet with your congregations in other ways by reaching out by phone, email, text, Skype and FaceTime, where your beliefs permit. Your assurance and support, as spiritual communal leaders, is extremely important during these taxing times.*

Prosecutor Knapp thanks the faith communities for their cooperation:

*In essence, we appreciate your help in doing what you do better than anyone else; encouraging and tending to the spiritual needs of your individual communities. Each of us appreciate your help in serving our overall community and helping them all through these challenging times.*

Chester Police Chief Williver, President of the Morris County Police Chiefs' Association, asked faith leaders and congregations to be mindful of neighbors in need:

*We also seek your assistance in checking on our elderly and otherwise compromised community members to see that they have what they need at home.*

We cordially thank you all for your cooperation. Please contact your local police departments if you have further questions about the emergency orders.

