

# Hawaii Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE | COVID-19 Update** **March 23, 2020**

Hawaii Governor David Ige issued an emergency order on March 23, 2020 in an attempt to slow the spread of COVID-19. Governor Ige is mandating all individuals in Hawaii to "Stay at home/Work from home" except for certain essential activities.

The Hawaii Conference office staff, as a response, will be working remotely until, at least, April 30. Telephone messages will be checked periodically so please feel free to contact office staff via phone or email.

The Hawaii Conference administration, in an attempt to abide by the spirit of the law, is requesting that all HIC pastors work from home or away from church premises. Church ministries should continue--but not on church premises; one exception being food banks in that they are considered essential community services; live-streaming, however, should occur in one's home and not on church premises.

Non-compliance to the governor's order will be a misdemeanor punishable with fines and or jail time. Hawaii Conference administration encourages compliance--not due to fear of punishment but because Christian love requires us to safeguard the health and safety of all.

May God give each of you His strength and wisdom during these challenging days. You are in our prayers.

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE | COVID-19 Update** **March 17, 2020**

In response to the Coronavirus pandemic, Hawaii Governor David Ige urged on March 17, 2020, the suspension of "services and activities in places of worship that gathers ten or more people." The Hawaii Conference administration, as a result, is directing that all Seventh-day Adventist congregations within the state temporarily cease on-site church gatherings of ten or more individuals until further notice.

Gatherings for church-related events at church locations should be postponed effective March 19, 2020; an exception is being made for churches that are providing live-streaming worship services. Live-streaming teams, however, should still abide with ten or less individuals present and they should practice social distancing by maintaining a distance of six feet apart from others.

Worship, Bible studies, prayer groups, visitation, and ministries are encouraged to continue virtually through various social media avenues (Zoom, Facebook, live-streaming, and etc.). Parents are also

encouraged to search for resources to become Sabbath School teachers for their children; one way is for churches to distribute Sabbath School lessons for home use.

As we face the challenges of the global Coronavirus pandemic, the above actions have been made with much consideration for the health and safety of our members as well as the people of the communities in which we live and serve. We also urge individuals to continue safe practices in their daily routines.

We will continue to keep you posted as developments unfurl. We anticipate that this pandemic will not be a short one so please prepare accordingly. We also encourage our churches to make online giving available if they have not yet done so at [www.AdventistGiving.org](http://www.AdventistGiving.org). For more information, please visit Hawaii Conference website: [www.Hawaiiisda.com](http://www.Hawaiiisda.com).

Let's continue to pray for each of our church families as we daily move closer to the soon return of Jesus.

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE | COVID-19 Update**

### **March 13, 2020**

#### **DOH Guidance on Public Events and Group Gatherings**

To protect the public's health and wellbeing, the Hawai'i Department of Health is recommending large, crowded gatherings or public events that include 100 people or more be postponed or canceled. These events include concerts and conferences, as well as professional, college and school sporting events. The Department of Health is recommending smaller gatherings held in enclosed spaces that do not allow social distancing also be postponed or canceled or held virtually. When possible, attendees should be no fewer than two-arms-length or six feet apart. Elderly adults and those with underlying health conditions who are at a greater risk for COVID-19 or respiratory illnesses should avoid attending large public gatherings.

At the Hawaii Conference our desire is to comply with these guidelines which means we are recommending to suspend in-person worship services at all of our churches of 100 attending individuals or more. For churches under 100 who choose to remain open we would require the recommendations of the DOH Guidance detailed in the paragraph above including the two-arms-lengths or six feet apart. This will take place effective Sunday, March 15 and continue until further notice. Please communicate this decision with your members tomorrow or soon after.

Here are some practical bullet points to implement:

- Funerals are an exception to the 100 individual limit.
- Please have someone at your church on Sabbaths to greet those who may walk-in so you can personally inform them of why the church is closed. Please do not just lock the doors.
- Plan to have virtual services for church worship and other meetings of over 100 until further notice.
- Educate members pertaining to online giving.

- Food banks and other vital ministries continue under these guidelines.
- Be sure to check on and minister to the elderly and the ill.

As you can imagine there has been prayer, deliberations and many discussions to utilize practical ways in protecting the health of our members and especially those who fall into high-risk categories. And not just our members but our communities and this State of Hawaii which we love and consider our home. We have an obligation to care for the most vulnerable in our churches, our families and our communities. By stopping these gatherings, we are then doing our part to stop the spread of an illness that could harm or kill those vulnerable people.

We recognize this recommendation is bringing disruption. And it challenges us to think of different ways to minister to our church families through this period. Please remember that “social distancing” is not tantamount to social isolation. We have been designed by our Creator for friendship and fellowship so please continue to find ways to communicate and provide much needed caring support for each other.

We live in an environment that is very fluid and will provide updates as necessary.

We would also make this personal appeal that you take care of yourself and your family. You are immensely valued and appreciated and your leadership / ministry is needed now more than ever. Rest assured you are being prayed for during this time of high anxiety and challenges.

Perhaps these words from Ellen White are appropriate to consider at this time:

“God will not work a miracle to keep those from sickness who have no care for themselves, but are continually violating the laws of health and make no efforts to prevent disease. When we do all we can on our part to have health, then may we expect that the blessed results will follow, and we can ask God in faith to bless our efforts for the preservation of health” (Councils on Health, p. 59).