



**Updated COVID 19 Advisory – July 4, 2020
For District Affiliated Churches
From the AGNCN District Executive Officers.**

The District Officers want to provide some clarity regarding Governor Newsome's July 1 amendment to the "Places of Worship" guidelines.

The two primary changes are 1) codifying the general June 18 order to **require** face masks for indoor meetings, and 2) "discontinue singing." It is the second order that has garnered the most question, so let's review that a moment.

The language of the order is clear and is found in two places, "Places of worship must therefore discontinue singing..." The order provides the rationale for the restriction: because exhaling droplets is highly contagious. Vigorous exhaling in close proximity (as occurs in congregational singing) is a high-risk activity. They do, of course, encourage congregational singing remotely/online. A phone call to the CA health department provided a more clarity about the order: They allow the congregation to have a singer behind plexiglass. The plexiglass barrier prevents exhaled droplets to spread to others. We presume that the plexiglass separation would also allow multiple vocalists to perform (in person or on live-stream), each within their own barrier. (BTW, one of our NCN churches has already experienced this, where lack of protection caused the entire online worship team to infect one another.)

This restriction on singing has certainly hit a nerve with many of our people. Pentecostals have always relied on congregational singing more than most Christian fellowships. Some have asked whether this is a government conspiracy to kill the church. (In our opinion, it is not.) Others have wondered whether this is an Acts 5:29 moment where we "draw the line." (In our opinion, this restriction is not an Acts 5:29 prohibition and we are still obligated to follow Romans 13:1.) Some are arguing that the government orders are unequally applied, and therefore unconstitutional. (This might be true, but the only way we will know for sure is if the court says so. So far, the court has not.) So, we are instructing all of our DA churches to comply with the order, to have the vocal leaders behind plexiglass and not engage in congregational singing.

Nevertheless, this restriction is bound to challenge us. Some, who have relied on singing as their “go to worship expression” may be left wondering, “how can I worship if I can’t sing?” Perhaps this is a good opportunity to rediscover some of the other types of biblical worship that we may have neglected: like “public reading of scripture,” “responsive readings,” “profession of faith/belief,” “giving gifts,” “bowing or kneeling” , and “praise Him on the musical instruments.” We encourage our churches to look past the restriction and find other ways to lead people in worship. It may be as simple as a rhythmic reading of a hymn together, humming along with the song leader, or listening to the words while the soloist sings, or reciting the words together. And we can still sing in our hearts, sing in our home/car/shower. It’s the vigorous exhale in a group setting that we must avoid.

One thing is certain, after this is over, we are going to appreciate congregational singing more than ever! (We might even get those in the back rows to join in the chorus!)