

RUTGERS

Miller Center for Community
Protection and Resilience

RESILIENCE: For Faith-Based Organizations Weathering the COVID-19 Storm / The Mission Continues

*Follow On Guidance from Rutgers' Miller Center for Community
Protection and Resilience*

March 25, 2020

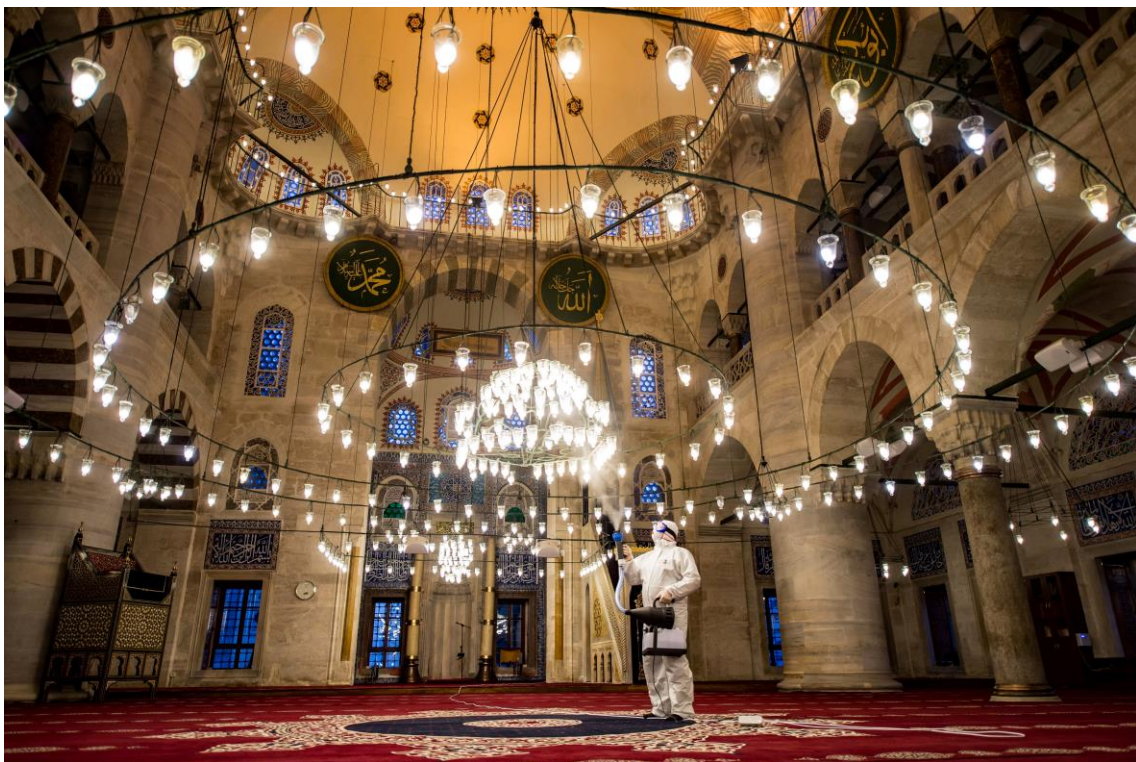


*Conducting a virtual church service in Giussano, Italy
Piero Cruciatti/AFP via Getty Images*

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with John Farmer*

Introduction

This guidance follows the Miller Center's initial Interim Guidance, issued on March 13, 2020, which outlined best practices for communities of faith to employ in managing the unprecedented pandemic the world is now facing as a consequence of the novel coronavirus COVID-19. Although there have been relatively isolated instances of faith communities gathering despite the teachings of science and the commands of governmental authorities, for the most part faith communities have been adapting imaginatively to our new normal, providing a sense of comfort, continuity and community in the face of escalating measures and uncertain prescriptions for managing the pandemic.



*Observing health protocols at the Kılıç Ali Pasha Mosque in Istanbul
Yaskin Akgul/AFP via Getty Images*

Highlighted below in this follow-on guidance are some of the best practices faith communities have been exploring. They are focused on

practical methods for adapting spiritual practices in order to reduce isolation, provide comfort, and restore community. We note at the outset, however, that just as the virus does not distinguish among faiths, so the fundamental spiritual message in response to it can be truly transcendent and universal, as reflected in this pastoral message:

All over the world, people are

slowing down and reflecting ...

All over the world, people are waking

up to ... what really matters.

To love.

*So, we pray, and we
remember that*

Yes, there is fear.

But there does not have to be hate.

Yes, there is isolation.

But there does not have to be

loneliness.

Yes, there is panic buying

But there does not have to be

meanness.

Yes, there is sickness.

*But there does not have to
be*

disease of the soul.

Yes, there is even death.

*But there can always be a
rebirth of*

love.

*Wake to the choices you
make as to*

how to live now.

Today, breathe.

*Listen behind the factory
noises of*

your panic.

The birds are singing again.

The sky is clearing.

Spring is coming.

*And we are always
encompassed by*

Love.

*Open the windows of your
soul*

*And though you may not be
able*

to touch across the empty square,

Sing.

Father Richard Hendrick, OFM, from "Lockdown"

Conducting Daily Activities

- Livestream religious services so that during “isolation” there is continuity and sense of community
- Livestream or post videos of regularly scheduled congregation leadership presentations or communications
- Conduct services and engagements over the phone
 - Far from ideal, but necessary in these times of social distancing
- Send out a daily or weekly email of scripture, faith or hope.

Communicating with Congregation

- Establish a weekly email update to member listserv
 - Include news about future congregation planning or news from other members
- Offer an “opt-in” option for those who want more frequent/daily communication
- Despite physical isolation, offer organized and established prayer times for feeling “connected”

In Serving Others

- Establish a web based clearinghouse for kindness
- Help with elderly grocery delivery or someone to provide regular check ins

Neighbor Supporting Neighbor

- Establish a web based clearinghouse for congregation membership business or services
- A directory of local community based businesses allows the congregation to support one another where appropriate and possible during this economic downturn – i.e. tax services, financial advisory firms, web/technical support for working at home or setting up home offices
 - o Note: although the U.S Secretary of Treasury, Steven Mnuchin, announced that the deadline for filing taxes will shift from April 15th to July 15th, he has also encouraged Americans to file prior to April 15th if you anticipate a refund.

Schools Are Closed but Books Are Open

- Establish a web-based clearing house for tele-tutors or parishioners who can assist parents
 - o i.e. children are home doing algebra, Spanish, or science projects but they might need academic support where possible by phone or video

Alert your organization to the dangers of relying on rumor or disinformation.

The World Health Organization's (WHO) [Myth busters page](#) is a valuable resource in deciphering fact from fiction. Also be aware of attempts to exploit the pandemic for economic reasons or to advance extremist ideologies. See the New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness webpage [COVID-19 Rumor FAQ](#).

Authors

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