

May 7, 2020

His Excellency Charlie Baker
Massachusetts State House
Office of the Governor
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Governor Baker,

We, the undersigned Massachusetts faith leaders want you to know that we have been praying for you and all those in authority with increased fervor over the past two months.

We care deeply for the health and welfare of our congregations and our communities. We recognize the risks and uncertainties surrounding COVID-19, and the extraordinary measures we are all having to take, and we have continued to serve, especially in feeding the hungry and comforting the many who are suffering now.

While we have been praying and serving, we have also been watching. We have seen how marijuana dispensaries, liquor stores and abortion clinics have all been deemed “essential,” but churches and other places of worship have not. We are grieved by this, but we have been patient, and peaceful.

However, church IS essential for us. Your order of March 23rd would forbid us from gathering together to worship God, but the word of God commands us to not forsake the assembling of ourselves together. We have done our best to temporarily adapt to extraordinary circumstances, but this must not continue.

It is also clear that church is essential under both our state and federal Constitutions. The free exercise of religion and the freedom of assembly are prominently enshrined in the first amendment to the US Constitution and the words of the Massachusetts Constitution still declare that “It is the right as well as the duty of all men in society, publicly and at stated seasons, to worship the Supreme Being.”

As we look at the date of May 18th, when your order banning gatherings of more than ten people is set to expire, we understand there is a “Reopening Advisory Board.” We note with disappointment that, despite the 8,000 churches in the Bay State and the millions who worship in and are served by them, they have no representation on that board. We therefore hope that you will hear directly from us now.

When the phased reopening of our Commonwealth begins, the reopening of our churches must be in the first phase. It is upsetting that, unlike roughly half the states across our nation, churches in Massachusetts were not deemed ‘essential’ at the outset, but this must come to an end. This is consistent with the federal guidelines for a phased reopening, where in phase one, “places of worship can operate under strict physical distancing protocols.”

The U.S. Department of Justice said earlier this week, “For many people of faith, exercising religion is essential, especially during a crisis.” They went on to specifically question the Governor of Virginia’s treatment of churches as his Commonwealth “has offered no good reason for refusing to trust congregants who promise to use care in worship in the same way it trusts accountants, lawyers, and other workers to do

the same.” We are asking you to trust us now, so we can better minister to our flocks and in turn assist you in our own small way in your efforts to serve the most vulnerable of the Commonwealth.

We are fully prepared to exercise extraordinary care and precaution to protect the health of our members and our broader communities. Loving our neighbors is part of who we are as a church. We are capable of following the guidelines for social distancing recommended by the Centers for Disease Control, just as other businesses Massachusetts has deemed essential. We are able to take the same precautions that their staff and customers have taken.

Please do not underestimate or dismiss the abilities of the church. Many of us have members who are doctors and nurses. We will listen to their expert advice as well, and they will help us be models of safety.

We ask you to swiftly and publicly recognize churches as essential and ensure that they are included in the first phase of reopening on May 18th.

Sincerely,

Pastor James Hopkins
First Lutheran Church of Boston
Boston

Dr. Roberto Miranda
Congregation Lion of Judah
Boston

Rev Raffoul Najem
CCF Ministries
Lowell

Pastor James Montoro
Pioneer Valley Baptist Church
Westfield

Pastor David Therrien
New Hope Christian Church
Swansea

Pastor David Hill
Abundant Grace Church of Boston
Brighton

The Rev. Mark L. Booker
Park Street Church
Boston

Pastor Roland E Cooper
Destiny Life Center International
Randolph & Boston

Pastor Gary Collette
Bread of Life Church
Westminster

Pastor Fernando Oliveira
Catedral de Adoração
Waltham

Pastor Phillip Shearer
North Shore Bible Church
Essex

Pastor Jeffrey Chandler
Cottage Hill Church
Springfield

Pastor Stephen Georgeson
Rice Memorial Baptist Church
Northborough

Pastor Stephen Kakaira
New Life International Center
Stoneham

Pastor Graham Jones
Sturbridge Worship Center
Sturbridge

Bishop Pacific M. Zagabe
Seedtime and Harvest Bible Church
Everett

Pastor Ricardo Valle
Iglesia La Luz De Cristo inc.
Chelasea

Pastor Ronald Grimley
Abundant Life Church
Wilmington

Marlene J. Yeo
CCF Ministries of Haverhill, Inc.
Haverhill

Pastor Dean McIsaac
Quaboag Church
Brookfield

Pastor Jeanne O'Leary
New Life Christian Fellowship
Fairhaven

Pastor Kodjo Agblekpe
Miracle Arena For All Nations
Boston

Pastor Rick McDonnell
West Church
Peabody

Pastor Genaro Corporan
CCRA
Lowell

Sam Kim

Intercultural Mission Church
North Andover

Pastor Mason Adair

Branch Church
Peabody

Rev. Frieda Sebalu

New Life International Christian
Center
Stoneham

Pastor Bruce Hanlon

Forestdale Church
Sandwich

Pastor Mark Broderick

Faunce Memorial Union Church
Plymouth

Pastor Juan Barbosa

I.P. Casa de Oracion Camino de
Santidad
Canton

Pastor Mageldi De La Roca

Centro Cristiano De Adoración
Waltham

Assistant Pastor Kevin Hicks

New England Baptist Church
West Bridgewater

Rev David Brezina

Messiah Lutheran Church
Lynnfield

Pastor William Brian Crump

Lighthouse Baptist Church
Holbrook

Pastor. Neftali Matul

Ministerios Vision Cristiana
Lynn

Rev. David Young

Westfield Evangelical Free Church
Westfield

Pastor Dave Aucoin

Abundant Life Assembly of God
Swansea

Deacon Peter Mulholland

Emmanuel Baptist Church
Norfolk

William Shoemaker

West Church
Peabody

Rev. Revedacs Francis Adonteng

Jesus Power Assembly of God
Worcester

Pastor Chris DiGiacomo

Lifeline Baptist Church
Haverhill

**Assoc. Teaching Pastor Isaias
Rivera**

Congregation Lion of Judah
Roxbury

Pastor Skip Gunn

Lifestream
Hampden

Pastor Adam Riveiro

Liberty Baptist Church
Easton

Pastor Moisés Domínguez

M.R.S. Ciudad Santa, Redimida y
Deseada
Salem

Pastor Nickolas Stelzig

Community Baptist Church
Lawrence

Pastor Susan J Santos

Ministerio Apostolico Jesucristo es el
Señor
Lawrence

Pastor John Brackbill

The Church of the Open Bible
Burlington

Lead Pastor Pete Hoglund

Emmanuel Baptist Church
Norfolk

Rev. Dr. Robert A Langevin

For His Glory Christian Assembly
New Bedford

Elder Jose Frias

Ebenezer Christian Church
Lawrence

Pastor Sérgio Coelho

Brazilian East Gate Missionary
Peabody

Rev. Esmeralda Collazo

Movement of the Living God, Inc.
Framingham

Pastor David Berroa

Peniel Spanish Christian Church
Lowell

Pastor Patrick Kilroy

Chapel on the Hill
Shrewsbury

Rev. Dr. Jeremy R. Pekari

Messiah Lutheran Church
Lynnfield

Pastor Dr. Montel B. Wilder

Grace Baptist Church
Pepperell

Pastor Jaime Perdomo

Iglesia Cristiana Nueva Vida
East Boston

Lidelmar Eduardo Caceres

Iglesia De Dios de la Profecia Inc
Lynn

John Busolo

International Faith Outreach Ministry
East Longmeadow

Rev. John D Brownlee
Massachusetts Baptist Association
Chicopee

Pastor Huston Crayton Jr
Lincoln Congregational Church
Brockton

Fr. Thomas F. Bouton
Saint Ambrose
Dorchester

Pastör Wayne Carle
Destiny Life Center International
Randolph

Francisco Caro
Pentecostal Church of God
Chelsea

Pastor Jack DaGraca
Father's House Family Church
Dighton

Rev. Renzo Ventrice
Christian Cathedral
Springfield

Pastor Neal Davidson
Hope Chapel
Sterling

Pastor Jason Corbett
Calvary Chapel Berkshires
Pittsfield

Nick White
Victory Baptist Church
Dedham

Rt. Rev. Philip Raczka, PhD
Annunciation Melkite Catholic
Cathedral
West Roxbury

Pastor Tim Crockett
Bible Way Baptist Church
Auburn

Pastor Robert Sargent
South Swansea Baptist Church
Swansea

Pastor David Meunier
Plainville Baptist Church
Plainville

Pastor Doug Conley
First Baptist Church
Webster

Pastor Steve Blumer
Hope Chapel
Sterling

Pastor Francisco J. Isaac
Casa de Adoracion Inc.
Taunton

Pastor Sharon Lunsford
Antioch Church
Taunton

Pastor Frederick A. Poulin
Grace Gospel Church
Somerset

Dr. Rogers Steven Warner
Brockton Assembly of God
Brockton

Pastor Tim Hatch
Waters Church
North Attleboro

Rev Dr. Richard R. Stewart PhD
Breath of Life
Turners Falls

Michael Rondeau
ViewPoint Christian Church
Southbridge

Pastor Eric Malachuk
Mount Greylock Baptist Church
North Adams

Pastor Joseph Hawkins
New England Baptist Church
Medford

Pastor Seth Opoku
Lifeway Baptist Church Int.
Leominster

Rev. David Martinez
Tabernacle Gospel Church AOG
Revere

Pastor James Peterson
Calvary Baptist Church
Easthampton

Pastor John Volante
Calvary Baptist Church
Easthampton

Pastor Edna L. Isaac
Casa de Adoracion Inc.
Taunton

Pastor David Braxton
The River Church
Haverhill

Pastor Tom A. Faulk
First Baptist Church
Groton

Bishop H Tenorio
The Growing Church
Everett

Katherine Puleo
Weeping Willows
Holden

Rev. Paul McManus
St. John the Baptist
Peabody

Rev. Aleksandar Vljakovic
St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Cathedral
Cambridge

Rev. Nelson R Santini
Iglesia Evangélica Hispana A/D
Peabody

Pastor Bill Stack
Haven Baptist Church
New Bedford

Rev. Richard. E. Cannon
St. John the Evangelist Parish
Hopkinton

Pastor Robert Sargent
South Swansea Baptist Church
Swansea

Pastor Brian Krogh
Mount Hope Christian Church
Belmont

Rev. Dr. Eno Mondesir
Haitian Baptist Church
Cambridge

Pastor Joe Faulk
South Middlesex Baptist Church
Framingham

Pastor Christina Desjardins
Lighthouse Christian Church
Feeding Hills

Pastor Sharon Porter
Way of Hope Pentecostal Church
Quincy

Pastor Patrick Kilroy
Chapel on the Hill
Shrewsbury

Rev. Sergio Perez
Harvest Ministries of New England
Weymouth

Pastor Jeffrey Bailey
Grace Baptist Church
Attleboro

Rev Robert L Riggins
Holistic Life Baptist Church
Miniseries
Dorchester

Pastor Cristian Borbon
Iglesias Adventistas de L&W
Lawrence & Worcester

Pastor Abimael Ayala
IDDPMI
Fitchburg

Lider Carmen Delgado
Crossover
Springfield

Alejandro Matias
I.M. Movement Of Glory
Worcester

Pastor Dave Hanshumaker
Renaissance City Church
Bradford

Rev. Luciano R. Taveras
First Spanish Free Methodist Church
Lawrence

Elder Robert Olmstead
Lighthouse Christian Church
Feeding Hills

Pastor Doug Mann
Berkshire Hills Baptist Church
Lee

Rev. Abraham Hernandez
NHCLC New England
Springfield

Pastor Raphael Germain
MAHC Church Of God IN Christ
Hyde Park

Pastor Baron Rodrigues
First Baptist Church of Bellingham
Bellingham

Pastor Chad E. Correia
Mountain View Baptist Church
Holyoke

Pastor Thomas Michael
New England Baptist Church
Medford

Pastor; Cesar Matul
Ministerios Vision Cristina
Lawrence

Pastor Jefe Santos
C.A. Jesucristo es el Señor
Lawrence

Pastor Luis Feliciano
Casa de Gracia y Restauracion
Fitchburg

Pastor Mageldi De La Roca
Centro Cristiano De Adoración
Waltham

Pastor Lori Jane Simmer
CCF Ministries of Haverhill
Haverhill

Pastor Donna Hanshumaker
Renaissance City Church
Haverhill

Pastor Nathan Desjardins
Lighthouse Christian Church
Feeding Hills

Rev. Paulo de Tarso Ribeiro
Portuguese American Baptist Church
Fall River

Jim Morose
South Congregational Church
Peabody

Pastor Roger Qualls
Faith Bible Baptist Church
Clinton

Pastor Robert Sargent
South Swansea Baptist Church
Swansea

Pastor Blass Mercedes
Iglesia Evangelica Luz y Vida
Lynn

Pastor Anthony Galan
Iglesia Adventista la Esperanza
Lawrence

Pastor Hector Claudio
I.E. Esperanza De Vida
Springfield

Louis Perez
La Piedra Viva
Dalton

Jeremias Cruz
Centro Cristiano Salem
Lawrence

Pastor Ramon Arce
Pentecost Church of God
Springfield

Pastor José A Santos
M.A. Jesucristo es el Señor
Lawrence

Pastor Wilson Ramos
Charis Centro de Adoración
Holyoke

Ventura Loredó
Metodista Libre de Salem
Salem

Ivelisse Vargas
Tabernáculo de Gozo
Springfield

Pastor Carlos Barranco
Ministerios Hogar de Restauración
Lawrence

Pastor Jainesio Ramos Jr.
Waves of Revival Church
Framingham

Diana L. Pares
Iglesia del Dios Soberano inc
Holyoke

Pastor Alberto Fonseca
The Salvation Army Casa de Luz
Lawrence

Pastor Daniel Trepanier
Fellowship Bible Church
Methuen

Pastor Frances Lariviere
Jesus to the Nations
Lawrence

Pastor Daniel Trepanier
Senior Pastor of Fellowship Bible
Church
Methuen

Pastor Wilfredo Santos
Kingdom Life Church
Worcester

Pastor Efrain Santa
Iglesia de Dios Pentecostal El Siloé
Springfield

Pastor Juan A. Ocasio
La Iglesia Cristo Sana y Salva Inc.
Springfield

Pastor Madaline Martinez
Spanish Christian Church A/G
Springfield

Pastor Erasmo Capellan Jr
Casa de Bendición
Springfield

Pastor Manuel J Hernandez
I.P. Jehova Es Mi Luz Inc
Springfield

Pastor Dr. Gabriel Almeyda
Nueva Imagen Ministry
Springfield

Pastor Jerry Del Valle
Iglesia Levantando Al Caído Inc.
Chicopee

Pastor Juan Feliciano
Calvary's Love Church
Springfield

Pastor James A. Fontaine
Friendship Baptist Church
Brimfield

Esli Martinez
So. Lawrence Assembly of God
Lawrence

Pastor James A. Fontaine
Friendship Baptist Church
Brimfield

Rev Victor Parra
Spanish Free Methodist Church New
Hope
Lawrence

José Bautista
Iglesia Pentecostés Rayos de Luz
Lynn

Jeremias Rosa
Apostoles Y Profetas
East Boston

Esli Martinez
Assembly of God Church
Lawrence

Pastor Manuel J Hernandez
I.P. Jehova Es Mi Luz Inc
Springfield

Pastor Michell Plaud
I.P. Casa de Misericordia Inc.
Springfield

Pastor Catherine Morales
I.P. Redimidos en Cristo Inc.
Springfield

Pastora Evelyn Edwards
C I D Iglesia la Hora Zero
Springfield

Pastor Elizabeth Ortiz
I.P. Dios Te Levanta
Holyoke

Rev. Robert Wise Jr
Liberty Church
Shrewsbury

Pastor Donald Bryant
Retired
Pembroke

Rev. Robert Wise Jr
Liberty Church
Shrewsbury

Pastor Daniel Peloquin
Our Father's House Ministry Center
Chicopee

Pastor Luis Morales
Vida Real Evangelical Center
Somerville

Pastor Esteban Carrasco Jr
House of Destiny Church
Southbridge

Pastor James Thomasson
MeetingHouse Church
Middleborough

Pastor Dilcia Prudencio
Vida Real Evangelical Center
Somerville

Dr. Diane Gunn, Sr. Pastor
New Life International Ministries
Hampton

Pastora Virginia Smith
M. Apostolico Internacional Pan de
Vida Inc.
Chelsea

Pastor Steven Ortega
Templo De Adoración, Inc.
Lawrence

Rev Michael Johnson
Baptist Temple Church
Fall River

Pastor Allen Johnson
Anchor Baptist Church
Woburn

Pastor Joseph Coppola
New England Baptist Church
West Bridgewater

Pastor Zach Nicholson
The Fellowship
Easton

Pastor Eli Serrano
Restoration Worship Center
Springfield

Pastor Christian Cole
Vida Real Evangelical Center
Medford

Pastor Dr. Jeff Black
New Life Community Fellowship
Pittsfield

**Pastors Adrianna & Adrianna
Cambara**
Ministerio Abba Padre Int'l.
Waltham

Pastor Marisol Martinez
Victory Brockton
Brockton

Pastor Kristine Zinnanti
Victory Church
Sharon

Pr. Sérgio Coelho
Brazilian East Gate Missionary
Peabody

Pastor Milagros Polanco
Iglesia Esmirna
Lawrence

Rev. Richard Amendola
New Life Christian Assembly of God
Haverhill

Pr Robert Paiva
Rivers of Living Water International
Ministry-Mirav
Marlborough

Pastor Miguel E. Montesino
Christ the Rock Church Boston
Dorchester

Pastor Andrés Cisterna
Centro Cristiano Tiempo de Dios
Waltham

Pastor Frank Campos
Community Christian Fellowship
Haverhill

Pastor Richard Picariello
Mount Hope Christian Church
Burlington

Rev. David J. Beguin
Pittsfield Evangelical Free Church
Pittsfield

Genaro Corporan
Casa Cristiana de Restauración y
Adoracion
Lowell

Pastor Workneh Tesfaye
Emmanuel Disciples Church
Cambridge

Bishop Brian C. Greene
Pentecostal Tabernacle
Cambridge

Pastor Juan Barbosa
Iglesia Pentecostal Casa de Oracion
Camino de Santidad Inc.
Canton

Pastor Eric Smith
Collinsville Bible Church
Dracut

Pastor Karl Vanderhoof
Life Spring
Worcester

Pastor David Oluwadara
Day Spring Chapel, Boston
Hyde Park

Rev. Louis Zinnanti
Victory Church
Sharon

Pastor Benjamin Morales
Vida Real Evangelical Center
Medford

Pastor Guillermo Rodriguez
Vida Real Evangelical Center
Medford

Pastor Luis Aldana
Vida Real Evangelical Center
Medford

Pastor Benjamin Haskell
Faith Assembly of God
Hyannis

Pastor Jose A Arriaza
Iglesia Pentecostes Sinai
Waltham

Pastor Lucy E. Rodriquez
Iglesia Pentecostal del Dios Vivo Inc.
Chicopee

Abiud Chacon
Centro Cristiano Emanuel - Boston
Dorchester

Rev. Dr. Roger D. Haber
First Baptist Church of Randolph
Randolph

Rev. Carlos Flor
St Thomas Aquinas
Jamaica Plain

Pastor Daniel Herr
Chester Baptist Church
Chester

Rev. Todd Cravens
Hope Christian Church
Winchester

Pastor Elizabeth Frias
Apostolic Ministry Jesus Christ Is
Lord
Lowell

Guillermo Reyes, Senior Pastor
Eternal Covenant Church
Brookline

Pastor Juan Carlos Morales
Vida Real Evangelical Center
Medford

Pastor Joseph Biddle
Calvary Temple A/G
Fall River

Pastor Ernesto Pineda
Centro Cristiano Emanuel
New Bedford

Genaro Corporan
Casa cristiana de Restauracion y
Adoracion
Lowell

Dr. John amaral senior pastor
New Destiny Christian Assembly
Seekonk

Aleksandr Tsvor
Crosslight Gospel Church
West Springfield

Pastor Chris Dyer
Fellowship Bible Church
Methuen

Pastor Gary Piette
Solid Rock Bible Baptist Church
Blackstone

Rev Samuel J. Hollo
The Community Church of Alton
Alton

Pastor Bryan A Tomes
Crossroads Community Church
Fitchbury

Lider Carmen Delgado
Crossover
Springfield

Graciela Bautista
Iglesia de Dios el Sinai
East Boston

Pastor Daniel Kohn
Victory Church
Sharon

Pastor David Fisher
New Beginnings
Plainville

Jeffmie Arriaza-morales Pastor
Iglesia Pentecostes Sinai
Waltham

Pastora Raquel Gonzalez
Iglesia Vida del Reino
Worcester

Pastor Dennis Dockham
Disciple of Christ Ministries
Quincy

Fr Luke A. Veronis
Saints Constantine and Helen Greek
Orthodox Church
Webster

Pastor Luis Aldana
Vida Real Evangelical Center
Medford

Pastor Raphael Germain
MAHC Church Of God IN Christ
Hyde Park

Reverend David Langford Sr
Community Christian Fellowship
Ministries
Lowell

Pastor Jesus Carrasco
Cento Familiar Cristiano EL Sinai
Lawrence

Pastor: Ezequiel Rivera
Iglesia Pentecostal del Dios vivo inc.
Holyoke

Rev Victor Jarvis
Iglesia Cristiana Ebenezer
Lawrence

Rev. Esmeralda Collazo
Movement of the Living God, inc.
Framingham

Wilson y Marelina Jiménez
Amanecer De La Esperanza
Lawrence

Rev. Dr. Mark T. Oliver
Trinity Baptist Church
Brockton

Pastor Alieen Abreu/Robert Abreu
Iglesia Pentecostal Dios Es Bueno Inc
Springfield

Pastor Fausto Escotto
Casa de Refugio Betel
Lawrence

CC: Karyn Polito
Mike Kennealy

Rev Brenda A Brown Pastor
Massachusetts Ave Baptist Church
Cambridge

Pastora Erica Nuñez
Amanecer De La Esperanza
Lawrence

Pastor Bob Butler
Open Door Baptist Church
Belmont

Pastor Henry Garcia
Iglesia Tabernáculo de Gozo
Springfield

Pastor Samuel Kasozi
Victory Family church Int
Newton

Pastor Fred Poulin
Grace Gospel Church
Somerset

Danneza Torres
New Haven Church
Lowell

Rev. Ismael Carrasquillo
Assembly of Christian churches Inc
Worcester

Pastores Rodriguez
Generation Without Limits
Lawrence

Rev. Joseph James Rizzuti Sr
Cornerstone Bible Baptist Church
Worcester