FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Religious Services Health Order
Chief Medical Officer provides health order regarding religious services

Recent activity in the State Capitol has caused confusion about religious gatherings in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, and during a sacred time for people of many faiths and spiritualities. In light of this confusion, Chief Medical Officer for the Unified Government, Dr. Allen Greiner, has issued a new order and additional guidance for Wyandotte Countians.

Although the Governor’s recent Executive Order 20-18 has been rescinded, the earlier Stay at Home Executive Order remains in effect until at least April 19. The spirit of the Stay at Home order is simple: limit the spread of this life-threatening virus by avoiding close contact with other people as much as possible. Dr. Greiner, Mayor David Alvey, and the Unified Government strongly discourage gatherings of any size.

“In order to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in Wyandotte County, it is absolutely critical that community organizations like churches, businesses, and all of our community members stay home as much as possible, avoid gatherings of more than 10 people, and maintain a 6 foot distance between people in order to reduce the spread of COVID-19.” Said Dr. Allen Greiner, Chief Medical Officer with the Unified Government’s Public Health Department.

In cooperation with the Governor’s Stay at Home Order, Dr. Allen Greiner issued a Health Order on April 9 providing guidance to local churches that wish to hold drive-in operations when online, radio or other telecommunications tools are not available.

While the UG strongly discourages gatherings of any size, any in-person religious services held should adhere to the following requirements:

- Attendees may arrive for the service no earlier than 15 minutes before the start of the service and must disperse immediately following the service;
- Each vehicle should only have members of the same household in the vehicle. No vehicle should have members from different households together in a vehicle;
  - Attendees must remain in their cars for the entirety of the service. If a person gets out of his/her vehicle, he/she may be asked to leave the service;
  - Attendees may roll down the driver’s side (left) window(s) only, and park in such a manner that adjacent vehicles do not have open windows between them;
  - Attendees will not enter the church building during the service for any reason, including using restrooms. Celebrants may enter the building as needed to prepare and close the service:
- There will be no distribution or sharing of materials, including written material or communion;
- There will be no passing of objects such as collection plates/baskets etc.;

Following these critical steps will help prevent the spread of COVID-19, and it will help keep yourself, your family, and your community safe.

“This is a time of year where many faith communities and families come together. We know how difficult it is to ask people to not observe these important events with in-person gatherings. That said, individuals can best protect themselves, their families, and the community by staying at home. These efforts will allow us to more quickly emerge from the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic. Staying home is necessary to protect us all,” said Dr. Greiner.

Large group gatherings have already worsened the spread of COVID-19 in Wyandotte County and elsewhere. In Kansas, there have been 23 confirmed cases, including 11 Wyandotte County residents, linked to the Minister’s Conference March 16-22 at Miracle Temple Church of God in Christ. Additionally, there have been 3 positive cases associated with a gala on March 14 at Rising Star Baptist Church and 3 cases linked to church services on March 8 at Power Realm Church of God in Christ.

“Our family will not be able to join in person with other families of our parish for Holy Week and Easter liturgies and family celebrations. People in Wyandotte County already feel this special loss. Yet we must, and will, keep our common faith while keeping our social distance,” said Mayor David Alvey.

The Governor’s Stay at Home Order will remain in effect until at least April 19. Churches planning parking lot services are encouraged to advise the Kansas City, Kansas Police Department in advance by calling 913-225-4788. The line is staffed from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. During other hours, calls should be made to the KCKPD non-emergency number, 913-596-3000.

Residents with questions about the Governor’s Stay at Home Order should contact 3-1-1 or visit mywyco.wycokck.org.

To learn more about the County’s COVID-19 response and access important FAQs and information, visit wycokck.org/COVID-19.

**Media Contact:**  
Janell Friesen, Public Information Officer  
Unified Government Public Health Department  
COVID-19 media requests: (913) 573-6727  
All other Health Department media requests: (913) 573-6703  
jfriesen@wycokck.org

###