

Religious Exemptions and Language in COVID-19 Orders
Revised April 7, 2020

Explanation of formatting: Those states whose names are **bolded** have a religious exemption of some kind. The bolded states that have an asterisk (*) before their name have a particularly robust religious exemption (for others the exemption may be somewhat cursory). States that are not bolded do not have an express exemption (for some the order may not extend to close houses of worship or stop services but not explicitly exempt them). Any language in the orders related to worship/religious activities is included. The states whose names are in **red** have orders with particularly harsh restrictions on worship. Each state has a link to the relevant order and/or FAQs or guidance on the order. To get a full understanding of the exemption in your state, the actual language which appears below the state's name should be reviewed; the bolding and asterisking are simply added for ease of review.

*Last updated April 3-6, 2020.

1. **Alabama**

- a. Alabama's stay at home order lists as an exemption "To attend religious services. A person may leave his or her place of residence to attend an event that is a religious worship service, wedding, or funeral in either of the following circumstances: (i) The event involves fewer than 10 people and the people maintain a consistent six-foot distance from one another; or (ii) The event is a "drive-in" worship service that adheres to the following rules: 1. All participants shall remain in their vehicles for the entirety of the service; 2. The participants in each vehicle all share the same place of residence; and 3. Participants do not come within six feet of participants in other vehicles." [Order](#)

2. **Alaska:**

- a. The order has no religious exemption; it states that "All individuals shall cease participation in public or private gatherings that include non-household members, regardless of the number of people involved. This includes, but is not limited to, weddings, faith gatherings, graduations, and funeral events." [Governor's Order](#), [FAQs](#), [Essential Infrastructure Attachment A](#)

3. ***Arizona:**

- a. The state's stay at home order of 3.30.20 provides that essential activities include, "Engaging in constitutionally protected activities such as speech and religion...provided that such is conducted in a manner that provides appropriate physical distancing to the extent feasible." [Executive Order](#)

4. ***Arkansas:**

- a. Both the Governor's Executive Order and the Secretary of Health's Directive state that, "This directive does not apply to businesses, manufacturers, construction companies, places of worship, the Arkansas General Assembly, municipal or county governing bodies, or the judiciary; however, these entities are advised to limit person-to-person contact and maintain appropriate social distancing of at least six (6) feet to prevent the spread of this virus." [Governor's Order](#), [Secretary of Health's Directive](#)

5. **California:**

- a. The California [order](#) does not mention religious organizations, but the list of essential infrastructure includes “Faith based services that are provided through streaming or other technology.” [California Essential Infrastructure List](#)

6. **Colorado:**

- a. The Colorado order provides an exemption for “In-person pastoral services for individuals who are in crisis or in need of end of life services provided social distancing is observed to the greatest extent possible. Houses of worship may remain open; however, these institutions are encouraged to implement electronic platforms to conduct services whenever possible or to conduct smaller (10 or fewer congregants), more frequent services to allow strict compliance with Social Distancing Requirements.” The guidelines for places of worship outline very specific recommendations and requirements for both in person and drive-in services. [Amended Public Health Order, Guidelines for places of worship](#)

7. ***Connecticut:**

- a. The Order places a “Restriction of Social and Recreational Gatherings to No More Than 5 People. Effective immediately, and through April 30, 2020, unless earlier modified, extended, or terminated by me, the prior order set forth in Executive Order No. 7D, prohibiting social and recreational gatherings of 50 people or more, is hereby amended and modified to require that all such gatherings of six (6) or more people, including but not limited to, community, civic, leisure, or sporting events; parades; concerts; festivals; plays or live performances; conventions; and similar activities, are prohibited throughout the State of Connecticut, except that religious, spiritual or worship gatherings shall not be subject to such increased restrictions, and shall instead remain subject to the prohibition on gatherings of 50 or more people, provided that they employ reasonable and appropriate distancing measures. To further clarify this order, it does not apply to government operations, private workplaces, retail establishments, or other activities that are not social or recreational gatherings.” [Order](#)

8. **Delaware:**

- a. Delaware’s most updated modification adds to the Fourth Modification (which has initial gathering and other limitations) “Houses of worship and other places of religious expression or fellowship, which shall comply with all social distancing requirements set forth in the COVID-19 State of Emergency declaration and all modifications, including attendance of no more than 10 people for in-person services under any circumstances. Houses of worship are strongly encouraged to transition any in-person services to remote services broadcast by telephone or video.” Religious organizations are included on the industry list as essential. [Fourth Modification](#), [Tenth Modification](#), [DE Industry List](#)

9. ***Florida:**

- a. The Florida stay at home order states that, “For purposes of this Order and the conduct it limits, ‘essential activities’ means and encompasses the following...Attending religious services conducted in churches, synagogues and houses of worship.” The order further adopts both the CISA list of essential services and that adopted by Miami-Dade County, both of which are included in the order. Miami-Dade’s relevant order provides that, “This order does not limit the number of persons who may be physically present at any religious service. Persons attending religious services are urged, but are not required, to practice social distancing, such as keeping six feet between persons and limiting group

size to less than ten people.” Further, it incorporates CISA’s guidelines, which includes “Clergy for essential support” in their list of critical infrastructure workers. [Order](#)

10. Georgia:

- a. The current Executive Order does not have an exemption for churches nor does it mark them as a critical infrastructure, although it follows the CISA list of critical workforce which includes as essential “Clergy for essential support.” The FAQs on the order state that churches are subject to the limitation that no more than ten people be present unless there are at least six feet between people at all times. Further, as a non-essential service, houses of worship would be subject to 20 criteria, which are listed in the order. [Guidance and FAQs](#), [Order](#)

11. **Hawaii:**

- a. The Hawaii order states that “Businesses and religious and secular nonprofit organizations, including food banks, when providing food, shelter, and social services, and other necessities of life for economically disadvantaged or otherwise needy individuals, individuals who need assistance as a result of this emergency, and people with disabilities” are exempt from the order. The COVID-19 FAQs state that “Services and activities at places of worship will be suspended.” [FAQs](#), [Order](#), [Guidance on Order](#)

12. Idaho:

- a. The Idaho order has no exemption for houses of worship or religious organizations; however, there is an exemption for businesses that provide “social services.” The additional guidance from the state clarifies the following “Can my church livestream their service?... Yes, so long as only the minimum personnel necessary to stream the service (no more than 5) and the individuals maintain the Social Distancing Requirements in the Order...Are drive-in theaters and drive-in church services allowed? Yes, as long as Social Distancing Requirements are followed at all times. Participants should avoid leaving the vehicle, vehicle occupants should be limited to household members, and common facilities such as concessions and restrooms should be avoided. Transactions and reservations should be handled online or over the phone.” [Order](#), [Additional Guidance](#)

13. Illinois:

- a. The Executive Order states that: “Organizations that provide charitable and social services. Businesses and religious and secular nonprofit organizations, including food banks, when providing food, shelter, and social services, and other necessities of life for economically disadvantaged or otherwise needy individuals, individuals who need assistance as a result of this emergency, and people with disabilities.” The FAQs clarify that: “The Executive Order does limit gatherings to no more than ten people and requires social distancing. At the same time, the Executive Order does not otherwise prohibit religious activities and specifically allows religious organizations to provide food, shelter, and social services, and other necessities of life, to its congregants and needy individuals. Religious organizations are permitted to conduct services and prayer online.” [Order](#), [Order extending stay at home order](#), [FAQs](#)

14. ***Indiana:**

- a. The Stay-at-Home order states that “religious facilities, entities and groups, and religious gatherings, provided they adhere to the CDC’s guidance on social gatherings” are exempt under the “Essential Businesses and Operations” exemption. [Order](#)

15. Iowa:

- a. The Iowa order states that “Social, community, spiritual, religious, recreational, leisure, and sporting gatherings and events of more than 10 people are hereby prohibited at all locations and venues, including but not limited to parades, festivals, conventions, and fundraisers.” The Order further provides, however, that “A gathering of people inside parked cars, trucks, or other enclosed motor vehicles shall not constitute a gathering of more than 10 people if no more than 10 people are inside each vehicle, all people remain inside the vehicle at all times, and the vehicle remains enclosed with all windows, sunroofs, and convertible tops closed.” [Order](#)

16. ***Kansas:**

- a. The Executive Order includes “perform or attend religious or faith-based services or activities” as an essential function and thus exempt from the stay at home requirement. The FAQs clarify that “Church services are permitted under KEFF 300.12.b, but must follow appropriate safety protocols, including maintaining a six-foot distance between individuals.” [Order](#), [FAQs](#)

17. Kentucky:

- a. An order from 3.19.20 states that “All mass gatherings are hereby prohibited...Mass gatherings include any event or convening that brings together groups of individuals, including, but not limited to, community, civic, public, leisure, faith-based, or sporting events; parades; concerts; festivals; conventions; fundraisers; and similar activities.” An Order put out on 3.25.20 designates as essential “Organizations that provide charitable and social services. Businesses and religious and secular nonprofit organizations, including food banks, when providing food, shelter, and social services, and other necessities of life for economically disadvantaged or special populations, individuals who need assistance as a result of this emergency, and people with disabilities. These organizations have a special responsibility to implement social distancing to the fullest extent possible, and to take all necessary actions to stop the spread of disease, including by stopping in person retail operations.” [Order of 3.19.20](#); [Order of 3.25.20](#)

18. **Louisiana:**

- a. The order states that “An activity is essential if the purpose of the activity is one of the following...going to and from an individual’s place of worship,” and thus this can be done consistent with the Stay at Home order. However, the order prohibits all gatherings of 10 or more people where people are in close proximity to one another. The order follows the CISA designation of essential workforce and so exempts “Clergy for essential support.” [Order](#)

19. Maine:

- a. The Maine order provides that “Gatherings of more than 10 people are prohibited throughout the State. Gatherings subject to this Order are those that are primarily social, personal, and discretionary events other than employment. Such gatherings include, without limitation, community, civic, public, leisure, and faith-based events; social clubs; sporting events with spectators; concerts, conventions, fundraisers, parades, fairs, and festivals; and any similar event or activity in a venue such as an auditorium, stadium, arena, large conference room, meeting hall, theatre, gymnasium, fitness center or private club.” The Maine order on essential businesses follows CISA with a few additional businesses deemed essential. None of the added designations implicate houses of worship. Under CISA the exemption for “clergy performing essential support” are exempted. Under the most recent guidance for non-essential businesses, a

house of worship could have no “more than 10 workers...in a space where social distancing is not possible,” must only perform activities that are “facilitated to the maximum extent practicable by those working remotely,” and must “not allow customer, vendor, or other visitor in-person contact.” [Order](#), [Essential Business List](#), [Order designating essential businesses \(this is the order that applies to churches as they are not deemed essential\)](#)

20. **Maryland:**

- a. The Maryland order states that “Social, community, spiritual, religious, recreational, leisure, and sporting gatherings and events (“large gatherings and events”) of more than 10 people are hereby prohibited at all locations and venues, including but not limited to parades, festivals, conventions, and fundraisers.” [Order](#)

21. **Massachusetts:**

- a. The Massachusetts order states that “Churches, temples, mosques, and other places of worship shall not be required to close their brick and mortar premises to workers or the public; provided, however, that such institutions shall be required to comply with all limitations on gatherings established in section 3 below.” Section 3 states that, “Gatherings of more than 10 people are prohibited throughout the Commonwealth. Gatherings subject to this order include, without limitation, community, civic, public, leisure, faith-based, or sporting events, concerts, conferences, conventions, fundraiser, parades, fairs, festivals, wedding, funerals, and any similar event or activity that brings more than 10 persons in any confined indoor or outdoor space.” Further, the list of essential services has an exemption for “workers at places of worship.” [Order](#), [List of Essential Services](#), [Order extending the prior order on gatherings and businesses](#)

22. ***Michigan:**

- a. The Michigan order states that “Nothing in this order should be taken to supersede another executive order or directive that is in effect, except to the extent this order imposes more stringent limitations on in-person work, activities, and interactions. Consistent with prior guidance, a place of religious worship, when used for religious worship, is not subject to penalty under section 14.” [Order](#)

23. **Minnesota:**

- a. The Minnesota order exempts “Faith leaders and workers. This category includes officials, workers, and leaders in houses of worship and other places of religious expression or fellowship, wherever their services may be needed. This category also includes workers necessary to plan, record, and distribute online or broadcast content to community members.” [Order](#), [list of essential businesses](#)

24. ***Mississippi:**

- a. The order qualifies religious entities as an “Essential Business or Operation” and thus exempt from the gathering limitation: “Religious entities including religious and faith-based facilities, entities and groups, and religious gatherings provided that they adhere to the CDC and the Mississippi Department of Health recommendations and guidance to prevent the spread of COVID-19.” [Order No. 1463](#), [MSDH Guidance](#) (which includes recommendations of avoiding gatherings of over 10 where people come into close contact and to practice social distancing), [Shelter in Place Order](#) (this order adopts the definition of essential business from Order No. 1463).

25. **Missouri:**

- a. The Missouri Department of Health's stay at home order states that "Individuals may...go to and from an individual's place of worship, provided that limitations on social gatherings and social distancing are properly adhered to." The Order bans gatherings of over 10 for businesses not listed by CISA. The FAQs state when giving examples of permissible activities, "Go to a place of worship – just make sure that no more than 10 people are in any single space at one time and keep 6 feet of distance between you and others." [Order](#), [FAQs](#)

26. **Montana:**

- a. The state's order has been amended to run concurrently with the POTUS order. [Order](#)

27. **Nebraska:** *no statewide stay at home order, but all counties are now under directed health measures.

- a. The Nebraska Directed Health Measures prohibit gatherings of more than 10 people. The guidance on the Directed Health Measures state that they apply to "places such as theaters, churches, houses of worship, gyms, social clubs, salons, and social gatherings, including weddings, funerals, concerts, and athletic events." [Link to Directed Health Measures by County](#), [Guidance on DHMs](#)

28. **Nevada:**

- a. The Nevada stay at home order prohibits leaving home except for essential activities. There is not an exemption for houses of worship. The Social distancing guidance states that: "To our faith leaders, I respectfully request that if you are unable to provide for social distancing protocols, you consider postponing services for your congregations." [Order](#), [Social distancing guidance](#), [Essential Businesses](#)

29. **New Hampshire:**

- a. Exhibit A of the stay-at-home order exempts religious entities: "Workers at places of worship" are deemed essential. "Entities that fall under this guidance shall continue to operate with necessary staff to complete critical and essential functions." The Order states that "This Order shall not apply to any church, synagogue, mosque, or other house of worship, provided that those organizations must still comply with Emergency Order #16." Order #16 states that "In accordance with updated CDC guidelines, the following activities are hereby prohibited within the State of New Hampshire: Scheduled gatherings of 10 people or more for social, spiritual and recreational activities, including but not limited to, community, civic, public, leisure, faith based, or sporting events; parades; concerts; festivals; conventions; fundraisers; and similar activities. This prohibition does not apply to the General Court, day-to-day operations of for profit or not for profit organizations and State Government, or gatherings for urgent medical purposes such as blood drives or meetings of medical personnel to discuss efforts to combat the COVID-19 pandemic." [Exhibit A of Order](#). [Order](#), [Order #16](#)

30. **New Jersey:**

- a. The New Jersey order provides that "leaving the home for an educational, religious, or political reason" is a permitted activity. However, gatherings are prohibited, and this covers all religious gatherings according to a letter to religious leaders written by a commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Health. [Order](#), [Letter](#)

31. ***New Mexico:**

- a. The state order provides that "Mass gathering does not include individuals congregated in a church, synagogue, mosque, or other place of worship. The FAQs further explain

“Are there any exemptions to the 5-or-more rule? A: Yes. If five or more people live together, they are exempt inside their residence. Also exempt are churches, synagogues, mosques or other places of worship.” [Order](#), [FAQs](#)

32. New York:

- a. State guidance states that “Houses of worship are not ordered closed however it is strongly recommended not to hold congregate services. If held, social distance must be maintained and compliance with DOH guidance, which can be found at <https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/information-providers>.” [Guidance](#), [Amended order in essential business](#), [Original order on essential businesses](#), [Order on gatherings](#)

33. North Carolina:

- a. The stay at home order lists as an essential activity “travel to and from a place of worship.” The FAQs state that “places of worship” are exempt but that “The Order allows individuals to attend their places of worship if they follow the mass gathering ban and do not have more than 10 people assembled. Social distancing should be practiced. Places of worship are encouraged to stream their services online to accommodate people complying with the Order.” [Order](#), [FAQs](#)

34. North Dakota:

- a. Order does not refer to houses of worship in the enumeration of facilities that must close. The guidance states that, “Any attempts to implement social distancing in cultural & religious gatherings should be informed by cultural & religious leaders.” [Order](#), [Guidance](#)

35. *Ohio:

- a. Listed as essential businesses and operations in the order are: “Organizations that provide charitable and social services. Businesses and religious and secular nonprofit organizations, including food banks, when providing food, shelter, and social services, and other necessities of life for economically disadvantaged or otherwise needy individuals, individuals who need assistance as a result of this emergency, and people with disabilities...Religious entities. Religious facilities, entities and groups and religious gatherings, including weddings and funerals.” The Guidance for the faith community from the Ohio department of health encourages remote services and meetings to take place when possible and that six feet be maintained between individuals when in-person events must take place. [Order](#), [Guidance for the faith community](#)

36. Oklahoma:

- a. Executive Department Executive Memorandum 2020-01 exempts “faith-based services that are provided through streaming or other technology.” Further, it incorporates the CISA critical infrastructure framework, so “clergy for essential support” would also be exempt. The state order limits gatherings to 10 or fewer people. All businesses not deemed essential are ordered closed to the public. [Order on gatherings](#), [Order on essential businesses](#)

37. Oregon:

- a. Oregon enumerated what places are closed and does not list houses of worship. However, businesses and nonprofits must work remotely to the extent possible and to the extent not possible must practice social distancing or close until they show compliance. “Non-essential social and recreation gatherings” of any size outside of a home are prohibited if social distancing cannot be maintained. [Order](#)

38. **Pennsylvania:**

- a. The Pennsylvania Department of Health's order provides that "gatherings of individuals outside of the home are generally prohibited except as may be required to access, support or provide life sustaining business, emergency or government services as outlined above." The guidance to the orders by the Governor and Secretary of Health, include the list of exemptions includes "Religious institutions," but also states "However, religious leaders are encouraged to find alternatives to in-person gatherings and to avoid endangering their congregants. Individuals should not gather in religious buildings or homes for services or celebrations until the stay at home order is lifted." [Governor's Order](#), [Secretary of Health's Order](#), [Guidance](#)

39. **Rhode Island:**

- a. Stay at home order of March 28, 2020 states that "All gatherings of more than five (5) people in any public or private space such as an auditorium, stadium, arena, large conference room, meeting hall, library, theater, place of worship, parade, fair, festival, park or beach, are prohibited." [Order](#)

40. ***South Carolina**

- a. The South Carolina order lists an exemption for "Attending religious services conducted in churches, synagogues, or other houses of worship." All are encouraged to practice social distancing. [Order](#), [Non-essential business list](#)

41. **South Dakota:**

- a. The South Dakota Order does not apply to places of worship. It requires employers to follow CDC guidelines and limit unneeded work gatherings. Also, it asks local and municipal governments to "Restrict public gatherings of 10 people or more, unless it is necessary." [Order](#)

42. ***Tennessee:**

- a. The Tennessee order state under its exemptions, "Organizations that Provide Charitable and Social Services. This includes, but is not limited to: businesses and religious and secular nonprofit organizations, including food banks, when providing food, shelter, social services, and other necessities of life for economically disadvantaged or individuals otherwise in need, individuals who need assistance as a result of this emergency, or persons with disabilities; Religious and Ceremonial Functions. This includes, but is not limited to: religious facilities, entities, groups, personnel, services, rites, and gatherings, including weddings and funerals, provided that the Health Guidelines set forth in Executive Order No. 22 are followed to the greatest extent practicable." [Order](#), [Amendment to Order](#)

43. ***Texas:**

- a. The Texas order includes as an essential service "Religious services conducted in churches, congregations and houses of worship." It further states that, "If religious services cannot be conducted from home or through remote services, they should be conducted consistent with the Guidelines from the President and the CDC by practicing good hygiene, environmental cleanliness, and sanitation, and by implementing social distancing to prevent the spread of COVID-19." [Executive Order GA-14](#), [Essential Services](#)

44. **Utah:**

- a. **The FAQs state that "Social distancing means staying away from mass gatherings (e.g., stadiums, theaters, shopping centers, schools, community events, church),**

avoiding local public transportation (e.g., bus, taxi, TRAX, ride share), and maintaining distance (approximately 6 feet) from others. This is a strategy public health uses often for other respiratory diseases such as influenza.” The text of the order exempts “Faith leaders and workers, including an official, worker, or leader in a house of worship or other places of religious expression or fellowship, wherever their services may be needed. Faith leaders and workers also include a worker necessary to plan, record, and distribute online or broadcast content to community members.” [Order, FAQs](#)

45. Vermont:

- a. The Vermont order states that “Except as set forth below, effective Wednesday, March 25, 2020 at 5 p.m., subject to closures and limitations provided in prior orders, all businesses and not-for-profit entities in the state shall suspend in-person business operations. These businesses and not-for profit entities are encouraged to develop business strategies, procedures and practices such as using an on-line presence, telephone and web-based service delivery and phone or online orders for curb-side pick-up and delivery.” The guidance states that, “The Agency recognizes the constitutional significance of religious liberty and the personal significance to many of worship in a religious community. Unfortunately, the significant health risks posed by this highly contagious virus, particularly to elderly and at-risk Vermonters, requires religious organizations to suspend worship in a brick and mortar setting. When conducting alternative worship services, organizations are directed to eliminate in-person contact. We ask faith leaders to help members of their congregations understand the dangers of COVID-19, the importance of staying home for the immediate future and the need for this measure. Section 6 (m) of the Executive Order specifically authorizes your organization to continue in-person operations for building and property services for the safety, sanitation and operations of facilities.” [Order, Guidance](#)

46. Virginia:

- a. Virginia’s order exempts from the stay at home order “Traveling to and from one’s residence, place of worship, or work;” but holds that “All public and private in-person gatherings of more than ten individuals are prohibited. This includes parties, celebrations, religious, or other social events, whether they occur indoor or outdoor.” The FAQ Guidance on the Order states: “What about religious services? Can I still go to my church, synagogue, or mosque? Virginians are strongly encouraged to seek alternative means of attending religious services, such as virtually or via “drive-through” worship. Places of worship that do conduct in person services must limit gatherings to 10 people, to comply with the statewide 10-person ban.” [Order, FAQs](#)

47. Washington:

- a. Washington’s order states that it is a “Proclamation to impose a Stay Home – Stay Healthy Order throughout Washington State by prohibiting all people in Washington State from leaving their homes or participating in social, spiritual and recreational gatherings of any kind regardless of the number of participants... All people in Washington State shall immediately cease participating in all public and private gatherings and multi-person activities for social, spiritual and recreational purposes, regardless of the number of people involved, except as specifically identified herein. Such activity includes, but is not limited to, community, civic, public, leisure, faith-based, or sporting events; parades; concerts; festivals; conventions; fundraisers; and similar activities. This prohibition also applies to planned wedding and funeral events. This prohibition shall remain in effect until midnight on April 6, 2020 [extended to May 4, 2020], unless extended beyond that date.... To implement this mandate, I hereby order

that all people in Washington State are immediately prohibited from participating in public and private gatherings of any number of people for social, spiritual and recreational purposes..." [Order, Order extending stay at home order](#)

48. ***West Virginia:**

- a. The Order lists "going to and from a place of worship" as an essential activity and as essential organizations "Religious facilities, entities, and groups and religious gatherings, including weddings and funerals; provided that such gatherings should still practice proper social distancing of six feet between persons to the greatest extent possible." [Order, FAQs](#)
***Some counties are under stricter executive orders applicable only to those select counties.

49. **Wisconsin:**

- a. The Wisconsin order exempts "Organizations that provide charitable and social services. Businesses and religious and secular nonprofit organizations, including prevocational group supportive employment, food banks and food pantries, when providing food, shelter, and social services, and other necessities of life for economically disadvantaged or otherwise needy individuals, individuals who need assistance as a result of this public health emergency, and people with disabilities... Religious facilities, entities, groups, and gatherings, and weddings and funerals, except that any gathering shall include fewer than 10 people in a room or confined space at a time and individuals shall adhere to Social Distancing Requirements as much as possible." [Order](#)

50. Wyoming:

- a. Statewide Public Health Order #3 provides that: "Gatherings of ten people or more are prohibited in order to help stop the spread of COVID-19 and protect the health of the public." Any gatherings not covered by the order are to follow the CDC guidelines. [Order—Continuation on Gatherings](#)

51. **Washington D.C.:**

- a. The Mayors order exempts "Travel required to visit a house of worship" as an essential activity. However, houses of worship are not deemed an essential business for the purposes of gathering under the order limiting gatherings. The "Additional Information" from the Gathering Order states "**Did the Mayor close churches?** No, but large gatherings of ten or more people are prohibited, so as a practical matter, most churches are not holding services. Weddings and funerals may only be 10 or fewer people. Houses of worship can maintain basic business operations, and many open their doors to people who walk in who want a quiet place to pray alone. Many congregations are also maintaining their social service programs to deliver essential items like food to people who are at home or helping others get to medical appointments." [Stay at Home Order, Gathering Order, Additional Information](#)