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PRESIDING BISHOP'S UPDATE ON COVID-19

4/23/20

The Church of God in Christ (COGIC) founded in 1907 is the fourth largest Protestant group in the United States and the largest Pentecostal denomination in the world with 10,000 congregations and 300 bishops in 112 countries and millions of adherents globally.

The Church of God in Christ has experienced the loss of numerous bishops over the last several months, including two prominent members of our General Board governing body – Bishop Phillip Aquilla Brooks II and Bishop Nathaniel Wyoming Wells, Jr.



A total of seventeen Bishops have died since January 2020; twelve of those since March 1. In addition to these bishops, our organization also regrets to report the loss of several pastors, elders and congregants. While we can confirm that some of these deaths resulted from the COVID-19 virus, we cannot confirm that the virus caused all of the deaths. Our continued prayer and plea is that God will provide a solution to end the widespread loss of life and suffering at the hands of this extensive coronavirus pandemic.

Contrary to what some media outlets have portrayed, the Church of God in Christ has adamantly expressed that the health, safety and wellbeing of our entire denomination, in the United States and abroad, is of the utmost importance to our organization. The Church of God in Christ does not support or condone any actions that defy the collective wisdom and recommendations of government leaders, both federally and locally, including scientific experts. In fact, the leadership of our church has communicated directly, on multiple occasions, with pastors and church leaders, encouraging all to abide by the directives and stay-at-home guidelines set by city, state, and federal officials.

On Wednesday, March 11, 2020 the Church of God in Christ launched its COVID-19 information website with Presiding Bishop Charles E. Blake, Sr.'s statement. On March 18th Bishop Blake issued a second statement "Listen. Trust. Obey." On March 19th the Mayor of Los Angeles and the Governor of California both issued the first stay-at-home order.

In addition the leader of the oldest African American Pentecostal denomination has issued numerous written and video statements, addressing COVID-19, to COGIC pastors and leaders.

Furthermore, the Church of God in Christ wholly supports all efforts to contain the spread of this dreaded disease. Presiding Bishop Charles E. Blake, Sr. states: "*The Church of God in Christ has and will continue to support local and federal guidelines in regards to COVID-19. As such, we will also continue to communicate these directives with our entire denomination. It is unfortunate that the media and critics of our denomination have disseminated inaccurate information regarding our handling of the virus as an organization. Instead of doing so, we very much encourage the focus to be on positive ways in which our government can assist all churches in the United States who may be struggling to remain open during these critical times.*"

Moreover, we believe that most churches are doing their very best to comply with the stay-at-home mandates, many of which are providing online service opportunities and staying connected with congregants via digital platforms. Much like small businesses, many




churches depend on the weekly giving of their congregants to maintain operations. We therefore cannot deny that the pandemic's impact on churches has been extreme.

While the coronavirus pandemic is a tragedy that has affected nearly every facet of life, the Church of God in Christ is confident that in due time, God will heal our nation and the rest of the world. We will progress towards a level of normalcy. In the meantime, we must all pray, use wisdom, and stand together to weather this storm.

Finally, even as the stay-at-home orders are being relaxed this weekend, the Church of God in Christ remains committed to prioritizing the welfare of people over the economy. We urge our pastors, local and state government leaders to exercise restraint in moving too quickly and too drastically. Further, we strongly encourage church leaders and government officials to please consider the learned opinion of scientific experts as decisions are made.

In His Service,



Bishop Charles E. Blake, Sr.

Presiding Bishop & Chief Apostle

Church of God in Christ, Inc.

Seventh In Succession

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