

Samuel Rodriguez, Dr. John Jackson Outline Plan to Gradually Reopen California Churches

Editor's Note: The following article is a statement released by Rev. Samuel Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, and Dr. John Jackson, president of William Jessup University. Both are calling California leaders to allow churches in the state to begin opening their doors. The state has been on lockdown since March 19. On Tuesday, April 28, Gov. Gavin Newsom announced a detailed plan to reopen the state.

We are mindful of our nation's proud heritage of religious liberty, established from its founding as a place of refuge and respect for people of faith. Today, we join together respectfully urging California's governor, county supervisors, mayors and other civic leaders to support the reopening of church gatherings in ways that are sensitive to public health concerns as well as providing for the fundamental freedoms so richly encouraging to personal and societal well-being and ensconced in our founding documents.

We want to work with our governmental leaders and are mindful of the importance of doing so with mutual respect in alignment with our convictions around Romans 13 and other appropriate biblical passages. We are grateful to our governmental leaders and have been in increased corporate and personal prayer for them throughout these days. We understand that various counties in California have different circumstances and are mindful that state, county and local guidance will provide varying public health frameworks that church leaders can utilize in addition to any national guidelines that are

provided.

We believe that churches can and will be responsible as members of our community utilizing the following guidelines here in California. We submit the following for your respectful consideration:

–May: Suggest that churches utilize drive-in resources for the first part of May and minimize any public gatherings for the first two weekends, moving to 50% of building capacity the last two weeks of May. We advocate that churches consider, if they gather in auditoriums, expanding their sanitizing procedures and encouraging the wearing of masks where appropriate.

–June: We encourage churches to develop procedures to reconvene in public worship and classroom settings at the level of 75% of room capacities with all the appropriate sanitizing and public safety protocols as appropriate, deferring to state, county and local guidelines where necessary.

–July: Restoration of 100% of building capacities, dependent upon public health guidelines provided leading up to this time period.

The Scriptures tell us that “hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life” (Prov. 13:12, NIV). A return to worship, teaching, shared service, compassion and generosity is in the heart of the people. We believe together that people of faith across the state of California will experience a rebirth of joy, hope and life with these measured and responsible steps in our state.