County of Santa Cruz

HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY
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Public Health Division

Press Release

For Release:	Immediately	Contact:	Jason Hoppin, Communications Manager
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RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES DURING THE SHELTER IN PLACE ORDER

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY- The Santa Cruz County Public Health Division reminds the public that gatherings are prohibited under the Shelter in Place Order through May 3, 2020, to help protect community members from COVID-19. Unfortunately, this Order impacts religious observances as well.

"We genuinely empathize with those who are unable to practice their religious traditions and celebrations in groups during this challenging time," Santa Cruz County Health Officer Dr. Gail Newel said. "These measures, while disruptive, aim to curb the growing number of cases resulting from community spread, and to limit opportunities for people to spread the virus to others unknowingly. Gatherings at this time would set back our efforts to reduce community impacts from COVID-19."

The Health Order impacts communal religious observances, including Holy Week and Easter, Passover, Orthodox Easter, Ramadan and other religious practices. Church leaders and religious organizations are urged to close in-person services and not bring large groups of people together while the Health Order is in place.

The Order does not suspend religious worship, and numerous local churches have adapted to continue to provide spiritual guidance to their members. These adaptions include the use of livestreaming, online recordings and more.

Staying at home, washing hands frequently, and placing six feet of physical distance between others are the best ways to curb the spread of novel coronavirus.

For local information on COVID-19, go to www.santacruzhealth.org/coronavirus, call 211 or text "COVID19" to 211211. Residents may also call (831) 454-4242 between the hours of 8 a.m. and 6 p.m., seven days a week.

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