

153<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Kentucky Annual Conference  
13<sup>th</sup> Episcopal District  
African Methodist Episcopal Church  
September 16-20, 2020  
Quinn Chapel AME Church (Louisville), Host Church  
Rev. Troy Thomas, Host Pastor  
Bishop Jeffrey N. Leath, Presiding Prelate  
Dr. Susan J. Leath, M.D., Episcopal Supervisor  
Rev. William R.T. Hale, Presiding Elder  
Rev. Kenneth J. Golphin, Presiding Elder

### **Report on Health & Wellness**

#### **Staying Healthy & Connected During Covid-19**

Covid 19 is real! Now is not the time to let down your guard. There is still a lot of coronavirus activity around. This means doing our part by a) wearing a mask, b) practicing social distancing, and c) staying home. Although the numbers remain high, the positivity rate is slowly decreasing. The positivity rate is the percentage of people who get tested that are positive.

How African Americans are impacted physically:

- African Americans are at much higher risk of contracting COVID-19 than the rest of the population, and they are much more likely than white people to die from the virus.
- The reasons for the disproportionate number of cases and deaths in black communities are because:
  1. Blacks have a higher rate of underlying conditions such as diabetes, asthma and high blood pressure that make COVID-19 more dangerous.
  2. They also are more likely to work in frontline jobs, live in crowded housing and use public transportation, increasing their exposure to the virus.

At the same time, the psychological effects of Covid 19 on the Black communities are just as concerning. Humans are social beings! Circumstances such as school closures, workplace closures, and social distancing, often have unintended negative impacts on emotional well-being such as loss of social connectedness and support.

Social isolation (or loneliness) is a big concern. Effects of social isolation related to the pandemic are mental health concerns, substance abuse, domestic violence, child abuse, poorer sleep and emotional or overeating may increase. Anxiety, low mood, stress, fear, frustration, and boredom may be triggered by Covid-19 restrictions.

Social isolation will disproportionately affect the elderly population, whose prior social contacts occurred largely at community centers or places of worship, all now closed due to the pandemic. Those who do not have close family or friends and rely on the support of voluntary services or social care, could be placed at additional risk, along with those who are already lonely, isolated, or secluded. The most at-risk population is adults aged over 80 years. Concern about lack of access to basic needs such as medicines, food, or water is real. We can help by picking up groceries, making meals, calling each day to make sure they are okay. It is important for people to receive regular check-ins.

Combine the pandemic, massive unemployment and recent protests in the past few months related to the killing of several unarmed Black men and women has added additional tension, anxieties, and stress to our everyday lives. It is important to acknowledge stress and take steps reducing it.

#### Strategies to Cope with Social Isolation & Stress Related Issues During COVID-19

1. Stay Connected Through Virtual Meetings
2. Schedule Some "Me" Time
3. Have Fun with Your Free Time
4. Make Working from Home Work
5. Focus on the Positives-Nourish Your Mind with Positivity
6. Stay Healthy at Home
7. Have a Routine
8. Get Some Fresh Air
9. Ask for Help