



## Washington State Legislature

April 30, 2020

The Honorable Jay Inslee  
Governor, State of Washington  
PO Box 40002  
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Governor Inslee:

We the undersigned legislators would like to draw your attention to an urgent need that has arisen in the communities we represent. While limiting in-person gatherings remains a sensible precaution to slow the spread of COVID-19, this restriction has had an impact on the ability of our constituents to practice certain elements of their constitutionally protected religious freedoms. Your verbal clarification on March 26 allowing clergy and church staff to work to produce online remote services was welcome and necessary, but there is a specific aspect of religious services that this clarification overlooked.

Holy Communion is one example of an important, sacred rite for many of the people we represent. This critical aspect of religious services simply cannot be conducted remotely. While it may not be prudent or possible to safely resume full in-person religious services at this time, we believe there is a viable means of permitting congregants to participate in the Eucharist and other rituals of faith safely.

Your Proclamation 20-25 includes a list of essential businesses that have been permitted to operate during the Stay-Home order. This list allows for restaurants to continue operating with take-out service. Restaurants have demonstrated it is possible to serve food and drink while safely maintaining physical distancing requirements and other protective measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. We believe religious institutions can operate under a similar premise.

Therefore, we respectfully request that you clarify your emergency restrictions to allow religious organizations to be permitted to conduct Holy Communion and other similar sacred rites under the same operational framework as restaurants serving take-out. Churches, temples, and other religious institutions should be allowed to develop congregation-specific operational plans under the general guidelines already in place.

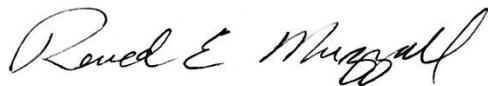
Promoting this flexibility for religious rites would benefit practitioners of the many faiths that comprise our communities.

Maintaining distance between practitioners and the safety of the elements of religious rites should be of top concern. Individual congregations should decide if they would like to participate, how they would like to conduct these rites (perhaps by drive-up or walk-up in parking lots or inside their buildings), and how to allow congregants to participate as they feel led (for example, perhaps establishing “appointment windows” for individuals or families to attend or allowing congregants to request elements to be prepared and set aside for them).

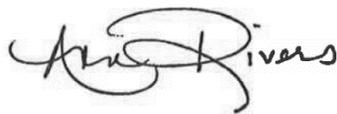
As we work together towards the safe reopening of Washington state, we ask that you consider where it makes sense to ease restrictions that would maximize quality-of-life for Washington residents with minimal risk exposure. We submit that religious rituals is one such area that would allow for the faithful to exercise their beliefs and have some semblance of a return to normalcy, with no greater risk than is currently allowed by restaurant operations.

We appreciate your attention to this matter, and look forward to your response.

Respectfully,



Senator Ron Muzzall, District 10



Senator Ann Rivers, District 18



Senator Hans Zeiger, District 25



Senator Mike Padden, District 4



Representative Bill Jenkin, District 16



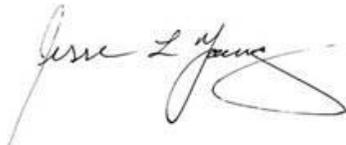
Representative Tom Dent, District 13



Representative Jenny Graham, District 6



Representative Skyler Rude, District 16



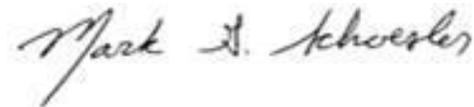
Representative Jesse Young, District 26



Senator Judy Warnick, District 13



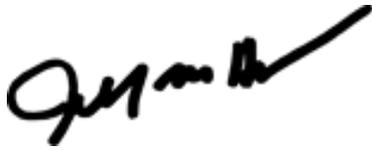
Representative Matt Boehnke, District 8



Senator Mark Schoesler, District 9



Representative Bob McCaslin, District 4



Senator Jeff Holy, District 6



Representative Luanne Van Werven, District 42



Senator John Braun, District 20



Senator Phil Fortunato, District 31



Representative Brian Blake, District 19



Representative Vicki Kraft, District 17



Representative Drew MacEwen, District 35



Representative Andrew Barkis, District 2