

State of Maryland Interpretive Guidance on Stay at Home Order 20-03-30-01 suggests that employers who are permitted to stay open (to any degree) under the Order may wish to provide a letter to employees who must commute to and from work. The suggested content for the letter is the name and address of the employee, the name and address of the employer, the nature of the employee's work, a brief statement of why the employer remains open for business, and a signature and contact information for the employer. Here is a sample outline:

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter affirms that [name and address of employee] is permitted to commute to and from work pursuant to Maryland Stay at Home Order 20-03-30-01. [Name of Employee] is an employee of [Name and address of Church], a nonessential business, and therefore is permitted, pursuant to the order, to travel between their home and business for the purpose of engaging in Minimal Operations

The church is closed to the general public, and [Employee] assists in remote care of members of the congregation, essential Church business, and the provision of remote religious services.

The Pastor of the Church, [name], can be reached at [telephone number and email]. The Clerk of Session, [name], can be reached at [telephone number and email].

Signed--Pastor or Clerk

Below is a very broad summary of some provisions in recent Virginia and District of Columbia Orders that may pertain to churches and citations to some of the orders. All jurisdictions have COVID-19 websites where the Orders and other information can be accessed.

In Virginia, Stay at Home Executive Order 55 says that persons may leave home for the purpose of traveling to and from their residence, place of worship, or work. Executive Order 53 on Temporary Restrictions does not directly address churches but says "although business operations offering professional rather than retail services may remain open, they should utilize teleworking as much as possible. Where telework is not feasible, such business must adhere to social distancing recommendations, enhanced sanitizing practices on common surfaces, and apply the relevant workplace guidance from state and federal authorities."

In the District of Columbia, Mayor's Order 2020-53 does not directly address churches, but provides that businesses with facilities in DC, except Essential Businesses (which does not include churches) shall cease all activities at the facility except Minimum Business Operations. Minimum Business Operations are the minimum necessary activities to facilitate remote delivery of services formerly provided in person by the business. Mayor's Order 2020-53 (Stay at Home) says that persons can leave their homes for purposes of engaging in Minimum Business Operations.