

Assalamuolaikum,

Due to the spreading pandemic many of the Central New Jersey (CNJ) masjid formed a joint coalition to take a united stance in response to the repercussions that many CNJ communities are facing. After discussions with both religious and medical authorities the newly formed Central New Jersey Corona Task Force (CNJ-CTC) strongly recommends that Muslims in CNJ make every effort to support self-quarantine and social distancing as advised by your local, regional, state, and national public health or government authorities. Congregants should avoid all public gatherings to protect themselves, their families, and communities.

The Task Force recommends to Masjid, community centers, schools, and other public centers, that all non-essential gatherings be suspended immediately until further notice. Masjid and community centers should follow guidance from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in accordance with local and national public health authorities. These recommendations apply to communities at risk of COVID-19 and where recommended or required by local, regional, state, and national public health or government authorities.

The Task Force makes the following recommendations:

1. Muslims in CNJ should follow local guidance and make every effort to support self-quarantine and social distancing.
2. Muslim community centers and places of worship should suspend all social and educational events and gatherings. Doing so is in line with important Islamic principles such as “avoiding harm takes precedence over acquiring benefit.”
3. Concerning religious counseling and similar services, we recommend Masjid and community centers implement online and telephonic platforms immediately. In this time of difficulty, the community will be relying on their faith leaders for advice, support, and guidance. Moving these services to virtual platforms fulfills a communal need while limiting the possibility of harms occurring from the lack of social distancing.
4. Concerning congregational prayers, despite some areas of scholarly disagreement, there are areas of clear agreement among religious leaders and public health experts. Muslims are encouraged to reach out to religious councils for specific religious guidance. The CNJ-CNC is united in the following recommendations:
  - a. The 5 daily prayers are individual obligations. Although performing these prayers in congregation within Masjid is highly recommended, when establishing prayer within Masjid poses undue hardship or harm to oneself or others, performing prayer individually fulfills our religious obligation. Thus, in light of potential health risks to congregants, the CNJ-CNC urges Masjid to follow long-standing Islamic legal precedent - aligned with local, regional, and national public health and government guidance - to suspend public congregational prayers.

**A note on Jumuah (Friday) prayers:**

Jumuah prayers are important religiously, culturally, and socially, but the Task Force reminds Muslims these prayers are not obligatory in specific instances - such as for the sick, travelers, or in the event of severe weather - and there is significant Islamic legal precedent for exemption. This communal rite can also be fulfilled by minimal gatherings (the weightier Hanafi view notes 4 individuals (including the imam) represent a quorum) and with minimal sermonizing (hamd, salawat, tilawat, and dua).

When a state authority temporarily prohibits or discourages public gatherings to protect people from credible harm, it is not permitted to establish a public Jumuah. Similarly, when it is infeasible to establish Jumuah in accordance with public health and safety recommendations of these authorities, the obligation to establish Jumuah is lifted. In these cases it is replaced by the obligation to pray Zuhr. Consequently, the Task Force strongly recommends that religious leaders suspend public Jumuah prayers. Many communities might switch to a virtual broadcast of Jumuah, but this does NOT take the place of the Jumuah prayers and cannot be performed except for those in physical attendance. Everyone else must pray Zuhr.

**A note on Ramadan:**

It is a very real and scary possibility that this pandemic will continue up and through Ramadan. As such, we should be prepared to keep our masjid closed until further notice. While iftar and tarawih programs hold great religious, cultural and social importance, we must remember that all of these programs are sunnah (recommended) actions that can and should be performed at home.

**Finally:**

The CNJ-CTC has prepared a series of protocols (starting from the next page) in an effort to minimize the impact of this pandemic. We ask Allah to lift this difficulty quickly and to protect our families and communities. Ameen.

CENTRAL JERSEY IMAM ADVISORY:  
CORONAVIRUS

**LEVEL 1: YELLOW**

*The following protocol is prepared and agreed upon by the Central Jersey Imams and Scholars listed below, for the Masjid and Islamic centers in the Central Jersey area to follow:*

The following items are either Canceled/Closed until further notice.

- ALL PART-TIME CLASSES / EVENTS / PROGRAMS (Official or Unofficial)
- ALL RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES
- ALL EVENTS WITH FOOD
- SUNDAY SCHOOL

The following individuals:

- The Elderly (60 plus)
- Sisters
- Children under 12
- People who traveled in the last 14 days
- Anyone with health issues
- Anyone with symptoms of Flu, allergy, or otherwise.

SHOULD NOT ATTEND the Masjid, even for JUMUAH.

- NO CONGREGATING IN GROUPS at any time on the premises.
- FRIDAY PRAYER will be reduced to 15 min. prayer.
- ALL un-official meetings are canceled.
- No overnight stays (Itikāf) permitted.
- Ramadan activities including iftaar, tarawih and qiyam ul layl will be cancelled.

Hygiene Protocol

- NO Handshake or physical contact between any two people.
- Make Wudu and use the bathroom at your home before coming to the masjid.
- Keep hand sanitizer handy.
- Wash hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer immediately upon entering the masjid and before leaving the masjid.
- Use disposable plastic sheets or medical exam table paper 18” to pray on (for your head and hands) and dispose of them after every prayer.

Pastoral Care Protocol

- Meetings via phone only

Support Protocol

- Establish Local Support Network Process to help elderly, sick and those in need

## Janazah Protocol

- As per CDC guidelines, "There is currently no known risk associated with being in the same room at a funeral or visitation service with the body of someone who died of COVID-19." However, the CDC also notes, "People should consider not touching the body of someone who has died of COVID-19."
  - Therefore, you can make this recommendation to the families you serve.
  - The body of someone who died of COVID-19 may not be able to be given a ritual washing due to fear of transmission.
    - Options include (but not limited to):
      - Pouring water on the body without physically touching
      - Tayammum (dry ablution)
      - A bagged body requires neither OR the bag may be washed (depending on the opinion)
    - Discuss with local religious and medical authorities for the best course of action
- Janazahs should be performed at the grave site with state mandated minimum attendance, ideally limited to immediate family

**LEVEL 2: ORANGE**  
**ACTIVATED ONCE THE CITY OFFICIALS DISCOURAGE CITIZEN'S FROM GOING**  
**OUTSIDE THEIR HOME**

IN ADDITION TO ABOVE:

- JUMUAH prayer will be cancelled.
- IMAM will live stream classes from the main hall/Masjid.
- Full-time schools, Weekend Schools and the Hifz program will close with the closure of local schools.
- Five daily prayers can continue for masajid that have less attendance than the state legislated minimum requirement
- People will be discouraged from coming to prayer
- People should come right before, pray, and leave immediately.
- All non-obligatory prayers should be done at home.
- No post-prayer extended lectures.
- Ramadan activities including iftaar, tarawih and qiyam ul layl will be cancelled

Hygiene Protocols

- Refer to Level 1 protocols

Pastoral Care Protocol

- Meetings via phone only

Support Protocol

- Refer to Level 1 protocols

Janazah Protocol

- Refer to CDC guidelines in Level 1 protocols
- Janazahs should be performed at the grave site with state mandated minimum attendance, ideally limited to immediate family

**LEVEL 3: RED**

**ACTIVATED AT THE DISCRETION OF THE MASJID DUE TO THE DYNAMIC NATURE  
OF THE PANDEMIC.**

THE MASJID WILL SHUT DOWN COMPLETELY  
(until further notice)

Hygiene Protocols

- Refer to Level 1 protocols

Pastoral Care Protocol

- Meetings via phone only

Support Protocol

- Refer to Level 1 protocols

Janazah Protocol

- Refer to CDC/OSHA/State guidelines and restrictions in Level 1 protocols including for a death due to COVID
- Janazahs should be performed at the grave site with attendance limited to immediate family

Prepared and agreed upon by the following Central Jersey Masajid and their Imams/ Scholars



Islamic Society of Central Jersey  
 Muslim Community of New Jersey  
 Muslim Center of Greater Princeton  
 Islamic Center of East Brunswick  
 Muslim Center of Somerset County  
 Muslim Center of Middlesex County  
 Islamic Center of Basking Ridge

Islamic Circle of Mercer County  
 Masjid As Saffat  
 Islamic Center of Ewing  
 Masjid Al-Wali  
 Islamic Center of South River  
 New Brunswick Islamic Center  
 Da'awatul Islamia of Somerset

For the latest information and updates, please visit your local Masjid website.  
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