



...Serving older adults in the spirit of Christian love.

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Dear Residents, Families and Friends,

Yesterday, Governor Tate Reeves announced that Mississippi's Safer at Home Order will expire on Monday, June 1, 2020, at 8:00 a.m. This expiration will essentially open all businesses statewide and allows for larger group gatherings, as outlined in the order. With this change, I felt it was important to address how our campuses will be moving forward in the weeks to come.

While we would like nothing better than to return to our normal daily activities on each campus, we must continue to follow the guidelines of the Mississippi State Department of Health and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. As you know, MSS elected early in the crisis to follow the guidance for skilled nursing facilities and to apply that same guidance to all levels of care and housing on its twelve state-wide communities. The restricted visitation and elimination of small group gatherings was outlined as key to preventing the spread of the virus in communities like ours.

So now the big question is: Will the Governor's new orders also reopen our retirement communities? In short, the answer is **NOT YET**. Our communities are governed by various Federal and State organizations that regulate our licensure to serve and house elders properly. Currently, these organizations are still requiring the same restrictions to prevent the spread of the coronavirus within long-term care facilities. Because of this, we will continue to ask all elders to shelter-in-place for a while longer. Our teams are working to develop proper protocols to protect our campuses, the best that we can, once people begin to move about again. Some restrictions will be lifted on certain campuses and on certain levels of care/housing faster than others, based on Federal and State regulations. Our teams will be communicating with the elders and family groups regarding the specific timeline and new guidelines for their portion of each campus as soon as they become available.

With that said, our teams are currently working on ways to provide immediate relief to the elders and families. We are exploring ways to reopen some dining with social distancing and multiple seating times. We are beginning to hold small group gatherings within the buildings to allow neighbors to enjoy some socialization and community. We are planning some outdoor events with proper spacing to offer entertainment and worship services for the elders. We are also looking at establishing some new visitation areas with distanced seating that would allow families to visit without the barriers of windows and doors yet will keep the elders safe from outside germs. In addition, we are offering walking groups, small exercise classes and bus joy rides to encourage elders to get out and move. Again, the opportunities and timing of these things will be different on each campus based on the levels of care/housing and the regulations we must follow.

This is all new to us. There is no cookie-cutter template on how to reopen our campuses following a pandemic. The virus is still very active, and we remain under threat of its deadly contagion. That is why it is critical that we take the utmost care to reopen in the safest way possible. I assure you Methodist Senior Services will always put the health and welfare of the elders first. We will faithfully do our very best to follow the Federal and State guidelines that govern our ability to care for the elders. And we will mindfully seek ways to respect the dignity of all elders and create connections with their loved ones and community. We covet your prayers and appreciate your patience as we navigate these uncharted waters together. And indeed, one day, we will gather again!

Steve McAlilly

President and CEO

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but one of power, love, and sound judgement. ~ 2 Timothy 1:7