

STEVE BIZZELL
SHERIFF

Johnston County *Sheriff's Office*

120 SOUTH THIRD STREET
P.O. BOX 1809
SMITHFIELD, NC 27577
(919) 989-5010
FAX: (919) 989-5039

MESSAGE FROM THE SHERIFF:

Our pastors and church leaders have been patient and have adhered to government authority thus far regarding the Governor's restrictions on holding indoor worship services.

Church families are law abiding citizens, salt of the earth people that should stand in unison to protect our First Amendment rights to "assemble peaceably" and to exercise our freedom to worship.

Retail businesses are allowed to operate daily under rules; however, church folks can't even go to church once a week which is inconsistent and unfair, and quite frankly, morally wrong. All we're asking the Governor is to allow indoor worship services with reasonable restrictions, somewhat similar to local retail businesses.

If social distancing and other guidelines are good enough to allow big box stores to operate, why is it not good enough for in person church services? It's as though churches have been treated differently. For example, currently worship services are limited in-doors to 10 people, but 50 people can utilize the same space for a funeral.

I think our pastors and church leaders would be more inclined to implement safety guidelines for their brothers and sisters, even more so than businesses do for their customers. Why can't churches be trusted to open and take precautions to protect their people's health and well-being?

As Sheriff of Johnston County, the deputies and I took an oath that we would endeavor to support, maintain, and defend the Constitution for the people of this county. As long as I'm Sheriff, my deputies nor I will forego that oath and interfere or prevent church goes to peaceably assemble and exercise their constitutional right to freely worship. Before I would do that, I would lay down my badge and go home!

NOW, LET'S HAVE CHURCH!