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NOTE: This is an interim guidance document, representing sound public health practice and information as it is currently available. It will be updated any time any new guidance is released on this topic.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR MOVING BETWEEN URBAN AND RURAL AREAS

How these guidelines reflect faithful Christian practice:

In the current circumstances, activities that would normally be encouraged must be reconsidered if they present a risk of spreading the infection. One such activity is movement between areas. The book of Leviticus (chapter 13) recounts the need for priests to order those who are sick to stay in their homes (quarantine). The passage specifically states that those who are ill have done nothing wrong but explains that this is done to prevent spreading the illness to others. The prophet Isaiah urges those in the midst of difficult times to enter their homes and shut their doors behind to “stay there until the fury has passed.” (Isaiah 20:26). These examples re-enforce the importance of not moving from place to place to prevent the spread of infection.

1. If possible, avoid movement from urban households to rural family homes. These are the reasons why:

- a. Transit from the city back to rural homes will be a primary way that the virus spreads to rural areas. Some people who travel back will be infected but not yet showing symptoms because it can take up to 14 days for those to present.
- b. Health facilities in rural areas are often far apart and may not have as many medical resources. Those who are infected will have greater difficulty accessing services in rural areas.
- c. Transport will require prolonged time sitting very close to others and this can be a primary means of infection.

2. People in urban areas may feel that travel back to family homes is essential. It should be considered only as a last option. These are the reasons why:

- a. If someone living in the city loses their job due to stay-in-place measure, a move back to be with extended family in a rural area may be the only means for individuals or families to have food because expenses are so much lower. However, large numbers of people transiting from urban to rural areas will tax the infrastructure of those rural areas. Family farms may not be able to generate enough food for newly-arrived household members and local markets will have fewer goods as transport slows because of the outbreak.
- b. Younger members of family networks residing in the city may feel an obligation to return home to provide care for family members (especially elder family members) in the event that those members become infected. This is discouraged because it creates a possibility of bringing the virus to your rural family members and to others in that community.

3. If an individual or any members of a household are showing symptoms of infection, they should not travel to a new location.

- a. Those with symptoms should avoid close interactions with anyone else except designated caregivers who follow protocols to limit exposure to the virus because of the likelihood of spreading this virus. If you're showing symptoms, stay at home or seek medical care.
- b. COVID-19 infection can present with severe symptoms in some people and transit could present a life-threatening complication that makes those symptoms worse.
- c. Moving into a different household exposes those within it to possible infection. The elderly and those with underlying health conditions are most at risk.