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CLERK OF THE BOARD
ORANGE COUNTY
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

M E M O R A N D U M

May 21, 2020

TO: Robin Stieler, Clerk of the Board

FROM: Chairwoman Michelle Steel, Second District *MS*

SUBJECT: Resolution Determining Houses of Worship Essential Services

Please add the following item of business to the calendar for the May 26, 2020 Special Board meeting agenda. The title of the item should read:

Chairwoman Steel – Adopt resolution determining houses of worship to be essential services.

**Board Resolution Determining Houses of Worship to be Essential Services
And Supporting the Resumption of In-Person Religious Assemblies**

Whereas, Houses of Worship of all faiths have been deemed “nonessential” by the State of California, during the COVID-19 pandemic; and

Whereas, the current restrictions established in the state’s Executive Order N-33-20 have overlooked the essential and critical nature of the services provided by clergy and religious assemblies; and

Whereas, the closure of religious organizations is preventing the poor, unemployed, and distressed among us to receive the numerous benefits of ministries, social services, and critical emotional support provided by these local institutions - funded not by taxpayer dollars but by the tithes and gifts from their own congregants - and provided free of charge; and

Whereas, there are millions of California residents who have a deep and sincere reliance upon their connection with local ministries, churches, synagogues, temples, mosques, and the clergy that leads them; and

Whereas, the Orange County Board of Supervisors sees the mandated closure of religious organizations is having a significant and detrimental secondary effect on the citizens of California; and

Whereas, over 1,200 California clergy and approximately 10,000 church & ministry leaders have signed a Declaration of Essentiality submitted to Governor Newsom and Dr. Angell, Director of the California Department of Public Health, dated May 20, 2020, on behalf of Advocates for Faith & Freedom, The National Center for Law and Policy, Liberty Counsel and Freedom of Conscience Defense Fund, and First Liberty, that addresses the religious community in California; and

Whereas, the Orange County Board of Supervisors supports this Declaration of Essentiality; and

Whereas, Thursday May 28, 2020 marks the beginning of the Jewish Holiday of Shavout, and Sunday, May 31, 2020, marks the Day of Pentecost, which commemorates the birth of the Christian Church; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, that the Orange County Board of Supervisors does hereby declare that gathering together in fellowship and worship in the faith of one’s choice is an “essential” service and we support the resumption of in-person religious assemblies beginning on this significant weekend, to be held in compliance with CDC and state guidelines for social distancing as is required of all “essential businesses.” May God bless all our clergy who daily minister to the spiritual, physical, and mental needs of not only their congregants, but to of all who cry out for help in times of need.