

PLYMOUTH  
CHURCH  
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**Article Title:** *'Pray At Home!' Houses Of Worship Close Physical Doors, Open Virtual Ones*

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**Date of Initial Publication:** 03/24/2020

**Publisher:** Bklyner.

**Format:** Online Article

**Plymouth Staff/Members Mentioned/Interviewed:** Brett Younger

**Themes, Events, etc.:** Coronavirus Response

Easter Sunday is coming up in less than two weeks. It's a special time where congregants attend church services with their families and loved ones. In a time like this, how are churches dealing with empty pews?

"The safety and well-being of our faith community is our primary concern. That is why the difficult decision was made to close churches," the [Diocese of Brooklyn](#) told Bklyner. "The Diocese felt it was critical to do so to prevent the possibility this easily spread virus could continue spreading in our Churches and buildings."

"It was also near impossible to properly enforce the government's limitation of no more than 10 people at Masses or other celebrations. So for the safety of our parishioners, the Diocese has chosen to do its part to flatten the coronavirus curve in Brooklyn and Queens," their spokesperson said.

They too will be attending mass virtually.

“As a result of the cancellation of Masses, the Diocese of Brooklyn’s communications and technology arm, DeSales Media Group has vastly expanded the broadcast schedule of live Masses from the Co-Cathedral of St. Joseph. Parishioners can now view Mass on the Diocese’s cable channel NET-TV in seven languages, six days a week. The Masses can also be seen online on our [website](#).”

And the same goes for the historic Plymouth Church, located at 57 Orange Street.

“Plymouth’s building is closed, but our church is not. When people are afraid they need the church, and so it is important that we continue to act like a family for one another. We are always the church—whether we are gathered or isolated,” Plymouth Church’s Senior Minister Brett Younger told Bklyner.

On an ordinary Sunday morning, that church brings in about 200 to 250 people. Last Sunday, people joined through 187 computers for virtual worship.

“We are finding ways to stay in touch without touching each other. We have a group that is checking on members via text, phone, and email. We started with the elderly, young parents, and those who live alone, but now we are trying to stay connected with everyone. We have about ten small groups—including youth groups, book groups, and writers’ groups meeting on Zoom.”

What about Easter Sunday?

“We will celebrate Easter knowing that worshipping in front of a screen is not the same as worshipping in a sanctuary,” Younger said, “but the God of Hope is present in home offices as well as houses of worship.”

Until a few days ago, [Makki Masjid](#), located at 1089 Coney Island Avenue, was open for prayers and Jummah. After they received some pressure from community members, they have also closed their doors. This past Jummah had brought in dozens of people. In a video posted on Youtube, the line to enter the masjid was pretty long. Many men standing on the line were wearing masks. That seems safe enough, doesn't it? Sure, except nobody was standing six feet apart. Luckily, it was the last Jummah, as they have now suspended all prayers.

“Muslims are obligated to follow the safety regulations, and it's sin if we break the law and put someone's or our health in danger,” Imam Ahmed Ali from IQRA Masjid Community and Tradition told Bklyner. “Until health officials & city officials don't find a vaccine, cure, or allow us to come back in normal routine, please call Azan inside your home, and pray in a congregation with your family. Meanwhile, we all should seek Help of Almighty God with patience & prayer.”

[Young Muslims \(YM\)](#) is a national youth organization where people from the ages of 13 to 25 get together every week in masjids to talk about Islam and bond. They have NeighborNets all over the country. In

Brooklyn, they meet at Masjid Quba, located at 1323 Foster Avenue. Since the coronavirus outbreak, YM has suspended all physical meetings. As a substitute, online meetings are to be held instead. Last Saturday, they took it to a new level. YM conducted its first national halaqah (a gathering studying Islam) online where 270 young men tuned in on Zoom.

“It definitely makes a difference not being with my brothers in the masjid. It is really unfortunate that we can’t host a NeighborNet during this time, but we know that it is the correct response,” Mosaab Sadeia, the YM National Outreach Lead told Bklyner. “It really warmed my heart to see more than 270 youth all over the nation on the Zoom halaqah, and while nothing can substitute the brotherhood of being next to each other, seeing that national solidarity was absolutely needed in these trying times.”

“And it is times like these that remind us why we do what we do and what brotherhood truly means,” he continued. “Brotherhood is solidarity, love, and support during the good and the bad, especially the bad. We hope everyone is safe and we maintain our position; stay home, wash hands, and stay safe.”

[YMS is the sister’s wing](#). According to Rida Farooqi, the YM Sisters (Sub) Regional Coordinator, moving the halaqah from a masjid to online is hard, but not so bad.

“I used to look forward to Fridays a lot because I got to meet everyone, but now we can’t so it’s sad. It’s a lot more fun and interactive with a bigger attendance when it’s in person,” she said. “I think sisterhood in a time like this is really important, which is why we didn’t cancel the halaqah and moved it online instead. We need that social support from each other and a sense of love and care, especially since we don’t know what’s happening within our homes or if anyone is going through a difficult time. So, that one hour we have is really refreshing.”

‘If you hear of an outbreak of plague in a land, do not enter it; but if the plague breaks out in a place while you are in it, do not leave that place,’ is a hadith (a saying) of Prophet Muhammad. It is what Kashif Hussain, the Deputy Public Advocate of Infrastructure and Environmental Justice, noted when asked about the coronavirus.

“The quote clearly guides us as a community to be mindful of the situation, no matter how horrific it is. As we all fight this global pandemic together, we must look out for each other. We must isolate if we contract the coronavirus, practice social distancing, wash hands, exercise extreme precautions, wear personal protective equipment, and also make sure we are not the reason for the spread of the disease,” he said. “Use technology to look after your families and neighbors.”