

## Moving Forward with the Corona virus

Dear Faith Family,

This past week our church leadership has been in discussions about possible steps moving forward in light of concerns over COVID-19. While realizing the need to be cautious, not wanting to take foolish risks or expose anyone to the virus, we are also trying to do our best to live a life of faith and trust, believing that even in the midst of these uncertain times, God is in control. We also believe the church is called to be a light and a witness to the glory of God, especially in the midst of unsettling circumstances, and it is incumbent upon us to stay faithful to that call and to the spiritual ministry and care of the souls entrusted to us. We recognize that people's spiritual health is just as important as their physical health.

For those reasons our leadership has decided—for the time being—to keep our doors open on Sunday. As per last week, we still ask you to follow these guidelines:

- No hugging or handshaking
- Keep a respectful distance when having personal conversations
- Please stay home if you are feeling ill or are more vulnerable to sicknesses and diseases (particularly those on the older end of the spectrum)
- Feel free to make use of the hand sanitizer stations as you walk in and out of church
- There will be no passing of the offering plates—instead they will be kept in the back of the sanctuary
- We are cancelling all extra Sunday classes and food related activities. This includes our coffee hour, the Lent study, and the Signs of the Sacraments Class
- We have also decided to cancel our Saturday Easter Festival (was scheduled for April 11<sup>th</sup>).

Having said that, we leave it up to each individual and family to decide if gathering together is a risk they are willing to take. If God gives you peace to do so, then please join us. If not, then please feel free to worship at home—our sermons are made available online usually within 12 to 24 hours after our regular service time. In the same way, we encourage each small group and Bible study to decide for itself if it will continue to meet. We encourage you to talk about these things (by email?), and express your particular views and opinions about whether or not meeting is a good idea.

Our desire is that each person would use this as an opportunity to seek God's wisdom and proceed by faith with whatever decision God has led them to. We do not want to judge or criticize anyone for doing what they feel is right before the Lord. The important thing is to keep up your walk with God, continue finding ways to have meaningful, spiritual conversations with others, remain faithful in your tithes and offerings, and continue praying for God's protection over our city and nation.

Please rest assured we will continue to closely monitor the situation, listening carefully to what health experts and local government tell us. If the situation continues to escalate, as expected, and poses a greater danger to our church and its congregants, it is likely we will have to shut our doors for a limited time. In case this is necessary, we will announce this through email as well as post it on our website. If someone you know from our church does not have access to the internet, please help us by communicating these messages to them and spreading the word through telephone. This is also a good time to make sure we have everyone's up to date contact information.

Lastly, I would like to leave you with some words of encouragement. This week I have been reading the Psalms. Here is what they tell us:

"Weeping [or worry or fear...] may remain for a night, but **rejoicing** comes in the morning."—  
Psalm 30:5

"Be strong and take heart, all you who **hope** in the Lord."—Psalm 31:24

"...the Lord's unfailing love surrounds those who **trust** in Him."—Psalm 32:10

"...the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear Him, on those whose **hope** is in His unfailing love, to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine [or viruses and diseases]. We wait in **hope** for the Lord; He is our help and our shield. In Him our hearts **rejoice**, for we **trust** in His holy name. May your unfailing love be with us, Lord, even as we put our **hope** in you."—Psalm 33:18-22

God bless you,

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