



March 12, 2020

Dear APPC family,

I am sure that the coronavirus (COVID-19) is high on everyone's list of concerns. With the Presidential address last evening, the public health officials of our nation are recommending, and in some cases insisting, on methods and practices to limit the spread of the virus. I want to assure you that your Church is not ignoring this issue.

From a pastoral perspective, I want everyone to know that we must not be driven by fear at this moment. Remember that in the midst of a storm-tossed boat, a situation that terrified the disciples, our Lord Jesus awoke and said, "Why are you afraid?" (Mark 4:40). He didn't say "Don't be afraid," rather he used the moment to encourage the disciples to examine their own minds and to logically identify where that fear originated from. We need to do the same! Jesus calmed that storm and will this one also.

God does provide and we must trust in that. He has also given us knowledge and logic, and we need to be using that also. We need to recognize several things about the recommendations to prevent the virus and how they relate to our community of faith. First and foremost is that we are a gathering spot, and large gatherings are a concern. Secondly, we also need to understand that a large percentage of our folks are over 60 and are in the high-risk category for people if they contract the virus.

I want to assure you we are NOT going to close the Church! We are, however, going to institute some procedures that should minimize transmission concerns. These are as follows:

- If you are ill, you should not come to Church.
- If you have an underlying health issue that weakens your immune system or would complicate recovery from an illness, you should consider not coming to Church until this threat passes.
- Please, please wash your hands often, using soap, warm water and washing for at least 20 seconds.
- We have positioned bottles of hand sanitizer throughout the Church. We encourage you to use them!
- We do not encourage physical contact during passing of the peace. Some people do not harbor a concern about this, but others do, and our practice needs to honor them. Let's not put anyone in the situation of having to choose. A smile and a "God bless you!" will be our norm until the threat passes.
- Instead of passing the plate during the offering time in worship, we will have a plate or basket at the front of the sanctuary, and members may come forward to place their offering in the basket; in addition, we will have a basket or plate in the narthex if you prefer to leave your offering there as you exit the sanctuary.
- We are suspending the use of a common cup during communion and instead will offer individual cups. We have already instituted safety precautions in the preparation of the bread and will continue to have that handed to each individual by a gloved person.
- We need to evaluate the food offered during fellowship. We will continue to have groups provide it, but we do encourage you to consider not indulging if you are in the high-risk category.
- We have instituted more frequent and thorough cleaning procedures for "high touch" areas. Bleach based cleaners are used to wipe these down on a daily basis.
- The Church preschool has decided to follow the lead of the Allen Park school system and will be following whatever practices and guidelines they implement.

I want everyone to know we have just begun to video record the 10 am sermon and post this on the Church You Tube channel quickly after the service. We also post links to this on the Church Facebook page, website, and send a link out via Constant Contact on email. Make sure you are on the Church email list to receive these links and other information as it develops. It isn't the same as going to Church, but it is a safe alternative.

As this situation continues to evolve, your Session is actively discussing ways we might be able to stay in community while restrictions are in place. If you might have an idea, I would encourage you to contact the Church.

In prayer and faith,
Pastor Tim

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