

# Emmanuel's Response to Coronavirus Concerns

It will come as a surprise to no one that we are in the throes of global anxiety about a pandemic caused by the COVID-19 'novel' coronavirus. Though there are many things that are still unknown about this threat, such as how severely our country will ultimately be affected or if it will become established in our own community, there is certainly grounds for concern. Consequently, this communication is intended to advise the Congregation what actions are being taken to deal with this situation.

At this time, there have only been a relatively small number of cases of coronavirus infection reported in this part of the US, and none within 100 miles of our community. That situation could change quickly, of course, and your Council, in conjunction with Pastor Towberman, is prepared to act rapidly if the regional health authorities advise more stringent precautions. However, for the present, we are putting in place the following basic measures as common-sense precautions to minimize the risk of exposure without undue disruption of our congregational activities:

- Until further notice, we will continue to hold our regularly scheduled worship services, meetings, and groups.
- We do strongly urge that anyone who has flu-like symptoms refrain from attending gatherings at Emmanuel.
- We encourage those who are in a high-risk group for the coronavirus to exercise their personal discretion regarding attending gatherings at Emmanuel.
- We are suspending the "Sharing of the Peace" practice during Sunday worship.
- When choosing seating in the sanctuary, we are suggesting that worshippers intentionally allow additional space between their family group and other worshippers.
- Pastor Towberman and the Lay Assistant will refrain from shaking hands with worshippers at the close of the service.
- We also encourage others to likewise refrain from shaking of hands when greeting fellow worshippers and visitors.
- Additional precautions will be put in place regarding communion distribution.
- Pastor and worship assistants will make liberal use of hand sanitizer when preparing for communion.
- Altar Guild will redouble their efforts to ensure thorough hand washing and sanitizing prior to preparing communion accouterments.
- We will suspend the filling out and passing of the welcome pads in the pews.
- Rather than passing the offering plate, it will be placed at the entrance to the sanctuary where offerings can be placed as worshippers enter.
- The waste baskets in the restrooms will be placed adjacent to the doors so that the paper towel used to dry your hands can be used to open the door before discarding.
- Worshippers are encouraged to bring their own hand sanitizer for personal use.
- Everyone is encouraged to practice good common-sense hygienic practices (such as covering coughs and sneezes, and frequent handwashing).