

Emmanuel's Coronavirus Response Measures

Urgent Update #1

Earlier this week, some prudent measures for minimizing the risk to Emmanuel's members to the COVID-19 'Novel Coronavirus' were published in the eNews. Those measures assumed that Emmanuel's operations would continue more or less as usual and focused on common-sense actions to minimize exposure risk.

Since the publication of those measures, the situation in our country, state, and local community has changed dramatically as our President has declared a national state of emergency, our state has closed all schools, and local communities and groups have forbidden or cancelled numerous public gatherings. This morning (Saturday March 14) your Council Executive Committee conferred in a 2+ hour conference call to consider additional measures.

Though we do take very seriously our commitment to worship and fellowship as the Body of Christ, we feel that we are called to also recognize that we have an obligation to not only our own members, but also to our families and our community. Though we may be willing to entrust our own well-being to the Lord, our decisions do play a role in the potential spread of the illness and the stewardship of public health resources. As followers of Christ, we ARE our brother's keeper. Thus, effective immediately, we are taking the following actions to protect our church family, those who use our facilities, and the larger community in which we live and serve:

1. Worship:

- a. We are suspending in-person worship services for the next two weeks (March 14-March 28). Specifically, the following physical **worship services will NOT be held at Emmanuel's facility**:
 - i. The Saturday evening service of March 14 (today)
 - ii. The Sunday morning services of March 15 (tomorrow) and March 22 (next week)
 - iii. The Wednesday evening Lenten services of March 18 and March 25
- b. **We are preparing for a call-in service tomorrow.** Please call in tomorrow morning at 10:15 to (712) 770-5505. When asked for an access code, enter 234426, then press "#". Please mute your phone during the service to keep background noise from distracting from the service. In the event of technical difficulties, a notice will be placed on our website. (For more information see Section 4.)
- c. The Lenten light meals scheduled for Wednesday March 18 and March 25 will not be held.

2. Emmanuel's non-worship meetings and gatherings:

- a. For the next two weeks we are directing that all Emmanuel groups that normally meet at church either suspend those meetings or make use of remote conferencing technology.
- b. The Council's regular meeting of March 17 will take place by teleconference (details to follow)
- c. The Wednesday afternoon Genesis Bible Study of March 18 will not be held.
- d. Notice of other meeting suspensions or alternate arrangements will be publicized as those plans are finalized.

3. Other groups that meet in our facilities:

- a. We are asking that outside youth groups that normally meet at Emmanuel (i.e., Boy and Girl Scouts) suspend their meetings until the local public schools resume classes.
 - b. We will be in conversation with the outside adult groups, such as AA and Al-anon who meet at Emmanuel to learn their plans.
 - c. Should those groups decide that they need to continue to meet at Emmanuel, we are requiring that all such meetings be confined to Heritage Hall.
4. We are actively exploring and implementing tele-meeting possibilities:
- a. For our regular Sunday worship tomorrow (March 15) we are planning for Pastor Towberman to lead a service of the Word from his home in Butler by means of a call-in telephone link. Do plan to dial-in for this service tomorrow morning so that we, the people of Emmanuel, can continue to be united in Word and Spirit, even though we are not able to physically assemble.
 - b. Depending on the success of our first effort tomorrow, we will likely continue, and may expand and refine the capabilities to be used for subsequent worship services (both Sunday mornings and Lenten Wednesday evenings).
 - c. For all of the ELC groups that do need to continue to meet during the next two weeks, we will be providing information as to how to use the teleconferencing capability that the Council will be using for our own meetings (see 2a). Of course, other conference calling technology may also be employed as best suits the group that is meeting.

In closing, we are not taking these measures out of a sense of fear or helplessness – we trust in our Lord’s care now, as always. However, we do feel it is our obligation as the people of God to do our part in protecting our members and neighbors as best we can.

This is a fast-moving situation and we will do our best to stay on top of developments and provide accurate and current information. You can help by checking your email regularly for updates. Please also plan to participate in the remote-attendance worship opportunities that we are arranging (and especially watch for the Update #2 bulletin later tonight that will provide call-in instructions).

Most importantly, please pray fervently for our church, our community, our nation, and our world as we together face this global crisis.

In the name of Christ,

The Executive Members of Emmanuel’s Council:

Lou Hiener (president)

MaryAnn Sinwell (vice president)

Fred Schamber (secretary)

Reverend Alden Towberman (interim pastor)