

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Updates at Emmanuel

20Mar20

At this time, Emmanuel is suspending our public worship gatherings [up to and including April 5](#).

We make this decision not out of fear, but based on our Gospel-centered calling to protect and serve all members of the community, both inside and outside of Emmanuel. At its core, the Christian proclamation is the promise that God will bring healing and life to us and our world, and this includes our bodies, our communities, and our nations. Therefore, we make all of our decisions with the health and flourishing of God's children in mind. This is one way that we can act as the Body of Christ, making the Kingdom visible in our own time and place.

In our church family there have been no reported cases of the COVID-19 disease. In addition, our staff has put strict cleaning, sanitizing, and social distancing procedures in place that meet or exceed public health orders. We have been very diligent and proactive in our work for several weeks now, and we are immensely proud of the ways that our staff and congregation have met current community challenges! Nevertheless, based on new law and new data provided by government officials, we believe that we must now take additional precautions – not because our particular community has been compromised, but because all communities must do their part to assist with slowing the progression of this virus at a societal level.

What We Know about Coronavirus

-- COVID-19 is a disease caused by a respiratory virus called SARS-CoV-2. The virus infects the lungs and bronchial passages, and is spread from person-to-person through coughing and by touching your face after coming into contact with fluids from an infected person. Symptoms of infection include fever, dry hacking cough, and body aches.

-- The vast majority of cases are mild (resembling a cold or common flu), and children and healthy young adults are generally at very low risk from the illness. However, it is now clear that the elderly and those with underlying health issues are at special risk and may develop breathing complications that can lead to death. Even those with mild symptoms can spread the virus to others if they are infected.

-- COVID-19 has now been classified as a pandemic, which simply means that 1) it is potentially life-threatening, 2) it is found all over the world, and 3) it is largely uncontained and is being spread through community transmission. In conditions like this, Personal Health precautions are not sufficient and Public Health measures must be taken to ensure that the disease does not overwhelm local healthcare systems. This is why we are being called to act at this time... not because there is necessarily a grave risk for us personally, but because we need to protect the healthcare system so that it can serve those most affected in the coming weeks.

-- For this reason, King County has issued a new Public Health Order temporarily banning all gatherings over 50 people, and putting strict requirements on gatherings of less than 50 people.

Emmanuel's Precautions and Response

-- Even before the Public Health Order was issued, Emmanuel had already established new procedures that include routinely disinfecting door knobs, faucets, and other points of contact in our facility where dirty hands might spread germs; making disinfecting wipes and hand sanitizer available throughout the building; not passing the offering plate on Sunday morning; engaging in the sacrament of Holy Communion by using individual pre-sealed cups and wafers; and asking members to limit physical contact. We have also asked all of our community members to do the following:

- If you are sick with a fever or a cough, please stay home. By engaging in social activities (even if you personally feel up to it), you risk the health of more vulnerable members of the congregation. If you are sick at home and you need assistance of any kind, please reach out to [Pastor Bob](#) or another member of the church, and we'll make sure you are taken care of.
- Cover your mouth if you cough or sneeze, and avoid touching your face. Coronavirus enters the body primarily through your mouth/nose/eyes, and you can unknowingly transfer the virus to yourself or others by touching your face or by not properly shielding your cough.
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before and after engaging in any kind of social activity, and repeat this washing often throughout the day (use of hand sanitizer is also beneficial, but complete washing with soap and water is most effective).
- Help to teach your kids and other family members about these basic hygiene practices.

New Precautions as of March 20

-- To help do our part in protecting the larger Seattle-area community, we will not be meeting for public worship on any Sunday up to and including April 5. After that period, we will re-evaluate based on updated public health data and will communicate next steps. We anticipate gathering again soon with a renewed sense of gratitude and joy!

-- Because some people from our community and neighborhood might show up anyway or might not get the memo, we will have our staff and leaders present and available during the normal service time to meet and pray with people who come to us seeking community and connection.

-- We will continue to record and upload weekly sermons, and we encourage all members to visit emmanuelphinneyridge.org to stay connected to our ongoing Bible study.

-- During these weeks we will experiment with new (old) forms of connection, like reaching out to each other through phone or email to share prayer requests and to show love and care for one another. This is a ministry that **ALL** members of Emmanuel are encouraged to step into this month. If you would like to join our team of people who are actively reaching out in an intentional way, please let [Pastor Bob](#) know and he will give you an assignment of specific individuals that you can contact during the week. In this season of Lent, when we recognize our weakness and mortality in light of God's resurrection promise, we can effectively use this time to devote ourselves in prayer for our families, community, and world.

-- We will invest ourselves fully in a stepped-up effort to care for the men in our homeless shelter, who represent a truly vulnerable demographic in this season. It is a blessing to us that we have such a group to care for right now, and we will be fully supporting the work of this ministry through the end of the shelter season.

-- As we continue to offer ourselves and our space for the good of the broader community, we are aware that finances might be strained, especially considering that opportunities for Sunday morning tithes and offerings will be eliminated. We ask all members of the church to consider giving at or above our normal levels, using our secure giving website at emmanuelphinneyridge.org/give.

Thank you for your care and for helping to protect the most vulnerable among us!