

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Updates at Emmanuel

1May2020

At this time, Emmanuel is suspending our public worship gatherings [up to and including May 31](#).

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 still been no reported cases of the COVID-19 disease. 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 many weeks now, and we are immensely proud of the ways that our staff and congregation have met current community challenges. We are confident that our careful approach has contributed to the overall health and wellbeing of our congregation and building tenants. Even so, based on new law and new data provided by public health officials, we must also take additional precautions that include suspending all physical gatherings – 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*. Anyone experiencing these symptoms should contact their health provider, and strictly limit exposure to other people.

-- 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 or unnoticeable symptoms can spread the virus to others if they are infected.

-- COVID-19 has 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. This is due, in part, to the fact that this disease is caused by a "novel" virus, meaning that human bodies have never encountered it before, and therefore the population has no immunity to it. Under these conditions, transmission and disease spreads exponentially. 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 each of 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, Washington State and King County have issued new Public Health Orders temporarily banning all gatherings through *at least* May 31, 2020. It has been shown that the single most effective way to stop the exponential growth of this disease among the population is to maintain at least a 6-foot space between all people, and to strictly limit any kind of public gatherings.

Emmanuel's Precautions and Response

-- Weeks before any Public Health Orders were issued, Emmanuel had already established new procedures that include daily disinfecting of 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 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).
- Maintain a 6-foot distance between yourself and others when outside your home.
- Help to teach your kids and other family members about these basic hygiene practices.

New Updates as of May 1

-- 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 May 31. After that period, we will re-evaluate based on updated public health data and state law, and we will communicate next steps. We anticipate gathering again soon with a renewed sense of gratitude and joy!

-- We have launched a whole new suite of online and remote fellowship and prayer opportunities, including an open video conference on Sunday mornings at 10am where members can gather for prayer. To access these opportunities, make sure you are signed up to receive updates through our weekly *Trumpet* electronic newsletter. Contact bob@emmanuelphinneyridge.org if you would like to begin receiving the newsletter.

-- 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 and worship offerings.

-- 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 extended season of Lent + Easter, when we recognize our mortality in light of God's resurrection promise, we can all effectively use this time to devote ourselves in prayer and care for our community and world regardless of where we're located!

-- Our men's shelter has now closed for the season, but we are proud to say that even in the midst of this intense period of time, we stepped-up our efforts to care safely and well for the men in our homeless shelter, who represent a truly vulnerable demographic in this season. We maintained our full operations through the end of the pre-determined shelter season, and are thrilled that none of our guests or leaders became ill with symptoms related to COVID-19 during the shelter season. Thank you to all staff and volunteers!

-- As we continue to offer ourselves and our space for the good of the broader community, we are aware that finances will 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!