



Coronavirus (COVID-19) Procedures for Volunteers at the Phinney Ridge Winter Shelter

At this time, there have been no reported cases of the COVID-19 disease at Emmanuel Church or among the guests at the Phinney Ridge Winter Shelter. However, we know this represents a serious public health issue, and it is critical that each of us take the necessary precautions to slow the spread of this virus within the larger society. We also recognize that our shelter guests represent a truly vulnerable population in this season, and we remain committed to continuing our care for this community for the duration of the 2019-2020 shelter season. To continue this care for our guests in a healthy and responsible way, we need our volunteers, shelter staff, and shelter guests to take certain mandatory steps in the coming weeks.

First, We Must Understand the Threat

- 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. The virus also remains alive for multiple hours on surfaces touched by infected people. 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, older adults 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.
- 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 slow the spread of the virus and 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, King County has issued strict new requirements for all gatherings.

And We Must Change Our Behavior Accordingly

- No volunteers, shelter staff, or shelter guests may enter the facility if they show signs of fever or cough. Shelter staff have made provisions to direct symptomatic guests to medical facilities, and volunteers are simply asked to remain at home if you are sick in any way. Older adults may wish to refrain from volunteering in the shelter during this season, whether sick or not.
- Immediately upon entering the facility, all persons must thoroughly wash and sanitize their hands, and repeat these steps before any food prep or service begins. While inside the facility, all persons should refrain from touching their face, and should re-sanitize their hands after touching shared objects.
- All persons in the shelter must refrain from directly touching each other (you can bump elbows or feet, or simply greet one another with words). Social distancing practices must also be employed, keeping a 6-foot distance from others whenever possible (this is the radius within which droplets from our mouths can impact other people when talking).
- Before and after meal service, volunteers or shelter staff must use disinfecting wipes on all food prep, service, and eating areas.
- To avoid multiple hands touching the same objects, meals will not be presented in a self-serve format. Our preferred method for presenting meals in this season is for volunteers to individually plate food items inside the kitchen, and then bring completed plates out to the guests.

If at any time you have questions or concerns, or if you become sick or can't be there for your shift, feel free to reach out to Sonja or Patricia directly, or email shelter@emmanuelphinneyridge.org.

Thank you for your service! We are so proud of the ways that the community has come together in this season to care for the most vulnerable among us.