



## **Coronavirus Preparation, Precaution, and Prevention** **March 8, 2020**

*'Beloved, above all I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth'. III John 1:2 KJV*

### **Preparation**

Periodically, infectious diseases become more pronounced and more widely spread throughout the globe. This has been the pattern of history in the epic struggle of humans versus their environment. Various diseases have from time to time spread rapidly enough to reach different parts of the world at a pace that is often unsettling. When these conditions exist, and the disease is virulent and deadly, the diseases are referred to as a 'pandemic'. Though this term is ominous, be assured that human populations have seen and survived them before, and we will do so again. Presently, the United States is managing the Coronavirus (Covid-19). The purpose of this communique is to give information as to how Grace Church International will protect her parishioners from unnecessary exposure to this virus.

Please be assured that this is not the first time, nor will it be the last time we have seen life threatening viruses move rapidly in our cities and even around the world. As a whole, the human family has survived Flu A, the Bird Flu, Ebola, SARS, MERS, the Swine Flu, Smallpox, Tuberculosis, and H1N1 (the Spanish Flu). It is to our advantage that the modern media makes information on the contraction and spread of infectious diseases so accessible to the public. It is also to our detriment that this type of ominous news, repeatedly broadcast over many networks, tends to inject fear into the public sphere and opens the floodgates for misinformation. Even though the risk to the public from the coronavirus remains relatively and comparatively low, this information will help us to mitigate even remote possibilities of a mass outbreak within our worshiping community.

Understandably, questions have arisen as to what is the most appropriate course of action for the church to take in order to keep our parishioners safe from this potentially life-threatening virus? We are making this published statement as a guideline for how we may effectively combat the spread of this disease while maintaining continuity of ministry to the congregation and to the community. This statement should in no wise be construed as medical advice. These are simply public precautions gathered from available websites and best practices of various denominations. This guidance focuses on the hygiene measures needed to disrupt the spread of coronavirus should any number of us be exposed even though we are presently at low risk. We will also provide procedural steps to be observed in the unlikely event that the virus disrupts our regularly scheduled worship in either or both of our locations.

## Precaution

In order to prevent the spread of the coronavirus throughout our congregation, we must rethink some of the interactions that we take for granted as a community of faith. We must make the small but necessary adjustments to our practice of personal interactions within shared spaces in order to heighten awareness of the nature of this pathogen and to mitigate its spread throughout our ranks. The CDC has made these recommendations for hygienic interpersonal interactions.

- Contain it – Sneeze into a tissue.
- Dispose of it – Immediately throw the used tissue away.
- Kill it – Wash your hands with soap and water.
- Do not touch your face unless you have washed your hands.
- Ensure thorough, regular cleaning of surfaces many people touch regularly.
- Self-Regulate – Remain at home if you are experiencing flu-like symptoms for the foreseeable future.

Although there is no imminent threat or need to take special measures during The Eucharist, Passing of the Peace, or Greeting the visitors during worship, we will still exercise prudence and precautionary hygienic measures like:

- Vigorous hand washing with disinfecting soap and water and hand sanitizer or sanitizing wipes prior to and immediately after corporate worship.
- Replacing handshakes with elbow touches, hugs, or some non-communicable interaction.
- Continuing to use individual cups for the Host and the Wine during The Eucharist.
- Allowing each individual to take his or her cup from the server without having to handle or pass the serving tray to other worshippers.

As a staff, we are implementing greater measures for cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces between services of worship in both locations. We are asking that congregants purchase and deposit large sized canisters of disinfecting wipes at both of our locations so that our ushers and greeters, leaders and workers may assist the staff in wiping down surfaces before and between services of public worship. Departments and Auxiliaries of the church will also ramp up their hygienic practices by more frequently using disinfecting wipes and sprays within their various areas of ministry function like, classrooms, rehearsal spaces, and children's ministry. Those surfaces will likely be:

- Door handles
- Light Switches
- Tables
- Restroom faucets
- Toilet and Urinal Flushing Handles
- Shared implements within your areas of ministry

## *Prevention*

Prevention of the spread of coronavirus is our current and overarching concern. In so doing, we will also prevent unnecessary illnesses, time away from the community of faith, time off of work, and misery that comes with sickness. In some extreme cases, the measures we are taking will even prevent death. Though to be certain, all of the current reporting suggests that persons of average health are at a very low risk of death from this virus. The ones who are most vulnerable are the aged, infants, those who have compromised immune systems, those who have recently undergone chemotherapy or radiation treatment for some other ailment, or those who currently have the flu or some other respiratory infection. We are instituting these preventative measures in order to safeguard the health and lives of the most vulnerable members of our beloved community, as Christ would have us do.

Prevention of a break in ministry to our community is another of our paramount concerns. In the unlikely event of a more widely proliferated outbreak in which the government or prudence demands that we curtail our corporate gatherings, we are also shoring up our communication media in order to prevent disruption of continuity in ministering to you. We have mapped out contingency strategies for broadcasting worship, preaching, and teaching from a central location into your homes and onto your electronic devices by way of our Facebook page, YouTube Channel, and livestream each Sunday should this eventuality arise. Each congregant must do your part by downloading the Grace Church International app and enabling its 'Notifications' function. This will allow us to contact you and give you instructions in a moment's notice.

Also, each member of the church must practice financially supporting the church with tithes and offerings via our website, PayPal, and/or CashApp. These tools often require a learning curve in order for the user to be able to operate them efficiently without stress. If you are not accustomed to giving in this manner, you should make an offering of any amount using our electronic media as a practice run in preparation for an unlikely scenario. This will help us to stabilize the church even in unstable times.

Finally, Jehova Rapha is The Lord God our healer! While we do not live in fear of the coronavirus or any other pathogen, we do seek to operate in wisdom and prudence for the safety of all of the members of our family of faith. We have prepared these guidelines so that we all may make the small but effective changes to our corporate interactions that we may thrive in the midst of pestilence. Healing is the children's bread! Please pray for the healing of those who have contracted this virus. Please pray for the vaccine and cure for this virus and plan to avoid it as best you can. We are praying for and with you.