



THEALLIANCE

Western Pennsylvania District

341 N. Chestnut Street, Punxsutawney, PA 15767

Friday, March 13, 2020

Dear District Family,

Our district leadership team desires to share an update with you regarding the Coronavirus (COVID-19) and how it may be potentially affecting the churches in our district.

Please understand that this is a rapidly evolving story, and we have been paying close attention to the events as they have unfolded over the past few weeks. We felt today was the right moment to communicate with you and pass on some encouraging recommendations.

We would like to begin by emphasizing that, while appropriate concern is valid, there is no cause for us to panic or experience undue anxiety. Our God is faithful, and we place our trust and confidence in his sovereign rule over our lives. Rather than be marked by fear, this is a season where our faith has the potential to make a lasting impression on our people and communities.

Please join us in praying that, instead of giving in to unnecessary fear, the body of Christ will be unleashed to work in unusual ways among the churches of our district in order that men and women will know true healing, peace, love, and the presence of Jesus as we walk this unprecedented path together.

At the same time, we want to encourage our churches to display wisdom in dealing with this global health crisis. Our team is carefully monitoring the recommendations from the Center for Disease Control (www.cdc.gov) and other government organizations to have a measured and fact-based response. We affirm the work that experts are doing and appreciate their efforts to communicate helpful information to the citizens of our country. We believe that it is wise and biblical to obey instructions given regarding safety measures related to the virus by our leaders.

With this in mind, **at this point we are recommending that regular Sunday services continue as scheduled while at the same time exercise discretion in order to mitigate the spread of illness.** We would also recommend that each church evaluate whether other special events and activities should continue for the next few weeks. This is a serious matter, and each leadership team must give prayerful consideration and thought to what is best for their own context.

(Continued on next page.)



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Here are a few practical suggestions:

6. If you or anyone that lives in your home is sick, whether with a simple cold or with flu-like symptoms such as fever, sneezing, or coughing, please stay home as a way of expressing love to others in your church community.
7. If you have congregants that are of “heightened risk,” demonstrate a love and care and grant permission to avoid public gatherings for a season. Be proactive to create a live stream or video broadcast option.
8. Pastors may want to restrict their home and retirement home visitation for the next few weeks.
9. If you or anyone in your congregation have been out of the country in recent days, or have been in close contact with someone who has traveled abroad, you may want to consider staying home as well.
10. Review your regular practices for cleaning/hygiene in your church:
 - Wipe down nursery surfaces with Clorox wipes.
 - Offer hand sanitizers in and around the church building.
 - Avoid shaking hands.
 - Encourage everyone to wash their hands frequently.
 - Evaluate communion and offering-taking procedures.
 - Encourage your church family to continue to give faithfully.
 - Limit fellowship, greeting and general social contact.

The Western Pennsylvania District leadership team is available to assist in any way possible. Please feel free to contact the district office or your regional team leader if you have questions or desire to dialogue about your own church’s plan moving forward. A helpful source of information can be found at <https://coronavirusandthechurch.com>, which has a number of resources that may be useful to you.

By joining the efforts of our communities in dealing with this current health crisis, we have the opportunity to express how much we love them and care about their well-being as well as our foundational belief that God is still in control. Even if typical church calendars are altered temporarily, we have the freedom to pray for our leaders, our medical professionals, those who are most vulnerable, and those who have contacted the Coronavirus.

We can seek ministry opportunities like checking in on neighbors and friends, delivering food or other necessities, and using social media to communicate loving concern. It is our prayer that these days will be filled with glorious opportunities for the name of Jesus to be lifted up and glorified! May his presence be keenly felt in Western Pennsylvania and around the world.

Serving together,

Dave
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