

Dear Church Family,

As news unfolds hourly and the attention of the global public has turned to concerns over COVID-19 (Coronavirus), you may rightly be wondering what Grove's response to this is. Let me take a moment to explain what has already been done and what we plan to do. At the outset, let me also remind us that as the people of God through faith in Christ, we have means of dealing with these issues that those who do not believe cannot comprehend. We understand that God is real and personal, He still is on His sovereign throne, and He has given us His Word as a lens through which we can view these events with calm assurance, hope and faith.

One thing that we have tried to do in order to mitigate undue panic is spread awareness and send the facts of COVID-19 from a reliable source on our Friday email. The following link is another great article published by a man who is both a pastor and medical doctor (infectious disease expert) - <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/what-we-know-coronavirus/>.

Another thing we are doing is encouraging people to take wise precautions. When Nehemiah and the people finished building the wall around Jerusalem, he mandated limited hours for the gates of the city to be opened because there were few people in the city and it was not safe to proceed with "business as usual" in that culture. I don't believe that was a lack of faith on his part, but rather a case of Nehemiah using his God-given wisdom for the protection of the people. To do our part to try to prevent the spread of disease, we will encourage frequent hand washing for 20 seconds, avoiding touching your eyes/nose/mouth, limiting physical contact, and covering your mouth when sneezing/coughing. Our excellent custodian Linda Brooke has been busily disinfecting frequently touched areas of the church (doorknobs, etc.) this week. We will have hand sanitizer available at key locations and tissue boxes throughout the church. We do encourage those who are sick or may have compromised immune systems to stay home during this time. Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough and shortness of breath.

At this point, we have not canceled any services. We understand that some larger, urban churches have chosen to do so out of prudence and caution. We will continue to seek God's wisdom, monitor the unfolding situation and evaluate risk, and gather for worship as long as the Official Board deems it wise to do so. Of course, individuals and families should use their own judgment as what services you choose to attend and not feel guilty for making those decisions. On Sunday, the Official Board of Grove will be meeting after the service to discuss these issues further (worship services, children's ministry, senior ministry, outreach events).

Most importantly, moving ahead we need to pray. Ask God to give your family wisdom and pray for the Board. I've suggested on the attached email that we pray specifically for worldwide containment of COVID-19, comfort, strength and health for those who have the virus (and their families), protection from the virus, peace and trust for those struggling with anxiety, and worldwide spiritual awakening and revival as a result of this. May God give us the wisdom to not over or underreact. As Pastor Larry reminded me this morning in a text, if the world cries out that the "sky is falling," we have the assurance of personally knowing the sovereign God who set the sky in its place. This is an opportunity to point people to Him. Here is a great article that speaks to how we can view all of this theologically - <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/christians-anxious-coronavirus/>.

Isaiah 26:3-4 says, *"You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD GOD is an everlasting rock."*

God's grace to you and greet one another with a holy elbow bump!

Pastor Brendan