

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Fact Sheet for Churches

As a church and community leader, you are on the front lines for the battle against Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). It is important to understand what you can do now to reduce your risk and the risk to your church family by simply spreading the facts and providing good information to congregation members so they are able to protect themselves. You can also help control rumors by sharing science-based information with others. Here are answers to the most asked questions concerning COVID-19. May the Lord richly bless you with wisdom and strength!

What can I do to protect myself and my church from COVID-19 (if you are still meeting)?

- a. **Wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds. (This is the single most important action we must take, starting now and doing it frequently).** Hand sanitizer may also be used but is not as effective as soap and water. (Consider placing hand sanitizer stations throughout church facilities and make sure there is plenty of soap and paper towels in restrooms). Also, avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
 - b. **Avoid contact** with people exhibiting illness and consider limiting large gatherings (e.g. >100 people) when COVID-19 is present in the community. Discourage handshaking and hugging among church attendees if COVID-19 is in the community.
 - c. **Clean and disinfect frequently used surfaces.** (e.g. door knobs, light switches, countertops, phones, faucets, sinks, toilets, etc.)
 - d. **Cover your cough and sneeze** with a tissue and wash your hands.
 - e. **Stay home if you are ill.**
 - f. **Wear a facemask if you are sick** and sharing a room or vehicle with other people.
 - g. **Avoid Travel** to affected areas.
- **What is COVID-19?** A novel coronavirus is a new coronavirus that has never been previously identified. COVID-19 is not the same as any previously identified Coronavirus. Most Coronaviruses are relatively harmless but some will mutate and become more harmful, including the ones causing Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS).
 - **Why is it called COVID-19?** COVID-19, 'CO' stands for 'corona,' 'VI' for 'virus,' and 'D' for disease. It was first identified in 20'19'.
 - **Where did COVID-19 come from?** Some Coronaviruses only infect dogs, cats or other mammals. COVID-19 started in the mammal population, genetically mutated, and crossed over to humans. The species of animal is unknown but likely came from a live animal marketplace in Wuhan, China.
 - **How is COVID-19 spread?** Coronaviruses are generally thought to be spread from person-to-person through respiratory droplets. Droplet transmission occurs when respiratory droplets generated via coughing, sneezing or talking contact susceptible mucosal surfaces, such as the eyes, nose or mouth. These droplets can infect people up to six feet away from a coughing or sneezing person. It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads
 - **Is COVID-19 in Texas?** Yes. Click on the link for the latest information: <https://www.dshs.state.tx.us/coronavirus/>) There are also people under federal quarantine at JBSA-Lackland (Air Force Base) in San Antonio, including U.S. citizens brought back from China and Japan by the U.S. State Department. Some of those quarantined have tested positive and will remain isolated until they test negative.
 - **How many COVID-19 cases are in the U.S.?** See the following link: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-in-us.html>.

- **Why are they canceling special events?** In a congregate setting, one person could place many more at risk. Everyone within six feet of the sick individual is at risk and if they are circulating through a crowd coughing or sneezing at a concert or sporting event, they could infect many more.
- **What are the symptoms of COVID-19?** Fever, Cough, and Difficulty Breathing
- **Does everyone show those symptoms?** No. There are some people who become infected and show few or no symptoms.
- **Can I get tested?** Maybe. There are risk factors, such as travel to a high risk area or suspected exposure to a diagnosed case, which makes certain individuals eligible for testing by the Texas state laboratory. Contact your local health department if you feel that you may be at risk.
- **Does COVID-19 mostly affect elderly people, or are young people susceptible?** People of any age may be infected. Those at highest risk of severe illness include older people and those with pre-existing medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, and heart disease).
- **Is there a vaccine or drug to prevent or treat coronaviruses?** No. The treatment for those who are ill is optimized supportive care.
- **Will vaccines against pneumonia protect you?** No. They do not provide protection against COVID-19 but may prevent pneumonia from other causes.
- **Will antibiotics prevent or treat Coronavirus?** No. They do not work against viruses.
- **Since some people get the illness by touching their mouth, can mouthwash help prevent infection?** No. Some brands eliminate certain microbes from your saliva, but it will not protect you against COVID-19.
- **Is my mail safe, even if it is from China?** Packages from China, or anywhere else, do not pose a risk. Coronaviruses do not survive on letters and packages.