



Memo: Coronavirus, Update #1
March 1, 2020
From the Desk of Pastor Chad

Bless our hearts... and bless our sneezes.

We're surrounded by fears and anxieties as it relates to the Coronavirus (COVID-19).

I'll confess: there are many hysterical memes out there: cheap deals on cruises, trips to certain countries, jokes on handwashing, etc. – but for many (and for good reason), it's "too soon" for such a sharp turn into humor.

But, fear not, there's always more than humor at our disposal.

The medical community continues to help us sort between fact and fiction.

Common sense might also be a vehicle worth test-driving, but we all know "common sense isn't a flower that grows in everyone's garden..." so let's get back to the medical community.

As reports continue to increase of symptoms and incidences, may I offer a word on behalf of New Song's leadership in the space below? For New Song, we have a few pointers to lift to your attention:

1). Despite political battles, this is a potentially serious concern for public health and must be treated with the utmost levels of attention. There are many, daily developments breaking from reliable sources; we encourage source-checking all facts you find through the following websites:

- The Centers for Disease Control:

www.cdc.gov

- The Virginia Department of Health:

www.vdh.virginia.gov

- The Hanover Department of Health:

<https://www.hanovercounty.gov/314/Health-Department>

- The Hanover Department of Health Reporting Line:

804-365-4313

(Note: if an emergency, contact 9-1-1 and/or report to your nearest Emergency Department first.)

2a). Despite the temptation to venture out and be amongst "the land of the living," if sick: please hunker down and stay at home. I repeat: we love you, but you are putting far too many in danger for a trip out to the store (or even to church) when exhibiting certain symptoms. For worship, we always invite you to tune to on our "livestream" on Facebook if you are experiencing any concerning symptoms, especially if you have a fever and/or any nausea or vomiting.

The links below are for our Facebook Livestream, podcast messages on our website, our E-Connect Card (prayers and questions), and ways to give (or set-up E-giving) if away from the baskets in worship itself.

www.facebook.com/growingnewsong

<https://www.newsongumc.org/messages>

<https://www.newsongumc.org/connect-card.html>

www.newsongumc.org/giving

2b). Remember: **if you are experiencing a fever, the CDC recommends you stay home until you are 24-hours fever-free.**

3). **Hand-washing:** so many have shared you're washing your hands so much that they're drying out and cracking. "Can't win for losing," as they say. While they make soaps, gloves and gels that may help reduce the cracking concerns, KEEP washing with warm, soapy water. We've been told to wash our hands for at least 20 seconds, so sing the "Happy Birthday" song while you're washing your hands and you'll know how long to go (no extra verses required, "any many more..."). Hand sanitizer is not always as effective, but we don't always have sinks readily available – so give that bottle a few squirts if hand-washing is not available.

4). Why do we keep hearing so much emphasis being applied to our hand-washing? Well... research is indicating HANDS are the #1 method this virus is spread. After you wash your hands, be sure to keep them away from your eyes, nose and mouth – be careful with food and food preparation, as well. Use utensils as often as possible (instead of your hands) and keep food products away from hands.

5). Preparations: many recommended sites are reminding us to limit our travels and our exposure to others who may have traveled through airports and/or known international hot-spots, etc. Another thought is to monitor your supplies at home: what food, water and logistical supplies would you need for approximately 2 weeks if unable to leave your home (besides a sanity break!)? We have unfortunately seen persons who are stock-piling items such as face masks, toilet paper and beyond. There is a huge difference between stock-piling supplies and stocking up. Be reasonable and responsible – stock-piling compounds the severity of this epidemic in negative ways for those who need supplies most critically.

6). We are looking at all aspects of the ways in which we conduct services, activities and visitations: Holy Communion, Greeting one another, Children's time in the back, and other gatherings, as well. This monitoring also includes meetings and staffing; we will keep you posted should any changes in our week-to-week practice need to be amended. **Note: a new update will be sent on March 11, 2020, with updated protocols.**

7). Last thought: proper sneezing. We have a big problem in Hanover County with sneezing. Can't explain why it's so bad here, but seriously. As a certified "germaphobe," I've seen way too many 'particles' from other people in public places! Elementary kids have not only been taught to sit "criss-cross applesauce," they've also been taught to sneeze into their elbow area (or upper sleeve area) while covering their nose and mouth. This simple practice helps contain droplets significantly. A tissue is another handy device – it's so "old school," I doubt most need witty notes about tissues... but still, just a friendly reminder: **USE** them. (And after use, be sure to *dispose* of them properly, which includes securing them away from kids and pets.) And ALWAYS say some derivative of "God Bless You." It's never a bad thing to be reminded of being blessed.

People have asked about the plans for what New Song would do if local officials suspend large gatherings (school, church services, employment, etc.) due to an outbreak. We are making plans for this situation, which includes being able to utilize technology (website and Livestream). We are a very fortunate congregation to have access to resources and experts who know “how to lead” in making sure we are able to still *connect*, even when not in ideal circumstances – whether for inclement weather (snow, ice, etc.), or even something like a virus, should it become concerning (much more widespread, pandemic, etc.). We have also included preparation plans for reading/devotional materials to be sent out, along with items for youth and children.

I’ll end with what I feel is the most important aspect: **pray**. Join in praying for those who have been diagnosed or who have been affected by this virus (along with their families). Pray for the medical teams, our elected and appointed officials, and the nations across the world who must “walk and chew gum” during various crises, like Coronavirus, every single day. Pray for the media reports to be accurate and that inevitable misinformation will be corrected quickly. Pray for healing, recovery, prevention, innovation, science; for business, commerce, trade, investments, and for normalcy to be “the way forward” very soon.

We have all seen this tiny, little virus create great stress and strain on everything from store shelves to stock markets, from flights to businesses, and more. Let’s be in prayer for all the above; I’m praying for what’s known, what’s unknown, and for all that’s being discovered every single day. May we soon be able to look back and say, “Glad that’s over!” In the meantime, may we be responsible and prayerful over all that’s before us.

Please be in touch, directly, should you have any concerns or questions I can either address or direct to the most accurate resource. Only the best; will see you very soon!

Faithfully,
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