

## **A message from the pastors: Coronavirus: being prepared, physically and spiritually:**

Dear Friends in Christ:

Every day the news about COVID-19, aka coronavirus, changes and seems to grow more concerning. At this writing it seems almost certain that the virus will reach us and our community, as it has already impacted people we know in other places. We will continue to follow the guidance of health officials and follow developments closely. Our faith calls us to place the highest importance on protecting human life. At St. John's we have regular conversations about what measures to take to protect each other, and what future measures might be taken.

### **Right now, we are:**

- Continuing with increased vigilance our usual practices: handwashing for communion servers, providing hand sanitizer and tissues around the building, and carrying out best food safety practices in our kitchen.
- Encouraging people to stay home from work, programming and worship if they are ill.
- Encouraging "non-contact" forms of greeting instead of handshakes and hugs.
- Eliminating "reach-in" forms of food service at Wednesday night meals.
- Creating back-up plans for our staff functions so that others can step in if someone falls ill.

### **We are considering future measures, which might include:**

- Cancellation of programming if school moves to online instruction
- Offering communion in "one kind only" (wine individual cups) to eliminate hand contact.
- If they are quarantined, eliminating visitation in nursing homes.
- If recommended by state officials, canceling worship services and offering prayers in virtual means only.

### **In this time, we ask you to consider:**

- Get used to forgoing the handshake for a while. We can convey warmth in many ways.
- Set up online contributions in case you cannot come to worship.
- Check out all the ways we have to communicate, including church emails, Facebook, KYMN broadcasts, online sermons and Northfield TV.
- Think about the needs of daily wage earners who might lose income in illness – consider an extra gift to Minnesota Food Share.
- Think about how you can reach out to friends and loved ones who are ill without close contact – cards, phone calls, text messages of care.

**This is a time of spiritual challenge as well.** All of us will be challenged to think not only about ourselves, but about our neighbors. The economic impact of this crisis may also give us reasons to be anxious about the future. But we are not the first generation to face uncertain times, and the resources of our faith give us many prayers and hymns to sustain us at such times, reminding us that nothing can snatch us from our Savior's hand. Pray for health care workers and those who protect the public health. Pray for leaders of nations that they may put wise decisions above their own political futures. Pray for the most vulnerable, physically and economically, that they might receive the aid they need. And pray that we might walk faithfully through this time together as a community of faith. Pastor Pam