



Dear FPC Family and Friends,


As the Coronavirus (COVID-19) has moved into the United States, and Wake County, and as we hear more and more warnings about the increasing probability of a potential widespread outbreak in the United States – I want to address the ways this affects our community. While I believe that Christians should not be ruled by fear, I also understand that we need to be good stewards and should not promote unnecessary risks. The Coronavirus has a long incubation period, which makes it hard to detect and contain early, and

the virus is particularly dangerous to immune-compromised populations including children and older adults. Therefore, I share a couple of reminders and ideas:

1. **Discernment: Only you can decide what is the right course of action for you.** If you are prone to illness – protect yourself. Sermons are posted on our website: www.firstpres-Durham.org and are available on podcast platforms.
2. **Prevention:** the best things we can do regularly to avoid cold and flu are also true for COVID-19:
 - **Wash your hands with soap and water frequently.** Soap breaks down the protective layer of the virus and kills it.
 - **Disinfect frequently touched surfaces.**
 - **Cough or sneeze into your elbow** (not your hands).
 - **If you are sick . . . stay home.**

3. The Church:

- **We will still gather for worship; we will still pass the peace**– feel free to use the peace sign  , prayer

symbol , or abstain. If an outbreak does occur, we will follow any quarantine practices and we will corporately abstain from physically passing the peace, but until then, we will continue as normal.

- **We will still celebrate communion, but that doesn't mean you have to** – you may always choose not to partake in communion. Feel free to come forward to seek a blessing (the next communion is not scheduled until April).
- **We will review safety and cleaning practices** and increase disinfecting food surfaces and areas where many people congregate.
- **We will have hand-sanitizer at key entry-points in the church.** However, hand-sanitizers are not a replacement for good hand washing: remember to wet hands before washing, scrub both sides with soap for 20 seconds, and then rinse.

A task force is being established this week to guide us in the days and weeks ahead. Please let me know if you would like to serve on this team.

If you do become ill, please let us know and allow us to be the church to you by dropping off needed supplies and nourishment at your doorstep. I certainly appreciate everyone's concern for the well-being of all our members and neighbors.

The key is preparedness over panic and the church leadership will continue to keep its ear to recommended practices for prevention. If you have any further questions do not hesitate to contact me.

Grace and peace to you all,
Mindy