

Dear Family at Church of Christ Northwest,

Many of you are no doubt following the news as it paints a grim picture of the novel virus (also know as the coronavirus or COVID-19) that has gone rogue and is now being labeled “pandemic,” or “worldwide.” The reports are frightening, the spread is rapid, and the toll is incalculable. As Christians, what is our response to be? We believe it should be twofold:

1. To remember that God is Sovereign. He is in control, and this virus is not “novel” to Him. Like the descendants of Korah in Psalm 46, we can boldly sing, “(1) God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble. (2) So we will not fear when earthquakes come and the mountains crumble into the sea.....(11) The LORD of Heaven’s Armies is here among us; the God of Israel is our fortress.” And, even if we contract the virus: “My health may fail, and my spirit may grow weak, but God remains the strength of my heart; he is mine forever” (Psalm 73:26).

2. To act in wisdom and in love towards our loved ones, neighbors, friends, and the greater community. In 2 Timothy 2:17, we are told, “For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and sound mind.” In I Corinthians 13, we are admonished to live out an agape (or, selfless) love towards others. Though the virus may not pose a serious threat to most of us, it can have dire consequences for our weaker brothers and sisters—especially for the elderly and those with serious chronic medical conditions. We are called to love and to protect them!

What does this mean, practically speaking? A number of things:

\*An attention to and compliance with recommended guidelines. Leadership will closely monitor the situation in our area and make needed adjustments to our gatherings, as directed by the CDC

(Center for Disease Control) and IDH (Illinois Department of Health) in an effort to limit the spread of the disease. (To learn more, visit [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov) and [dph.illinois.gov](http://dph.illinois.gov) )

\*Cancellation of all Sunday School Classes to prevent the spread of the virus in small, contained spaces with frequent person-to-person contact.

\*Stricter guidelines on attendance at worship services. We ask that if you or a family member have ANY one of the symptoms linked to the coronavirus, including fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, or difficulty breathing, PLEASE stay at home! Likewise, relatives who are considered to be in a higher risk group should consider staying home. This includes older adults and people who have serious chronic medical conditions like heart and lung disease.

\*Restricted physical demonstrations of greeting or affection—in other words, let's exchange cheerful hello's and 'air' high-fives, avoiding handshakes and hugs for now.

\*Options to watch the sermon from the comfort of your home and to give online. (for sermons, visit [cocnw.org](http://cocnw.org). From the menu on the upper right corner, click on “Media”, then “Watch Sermons”)(To give online, from the menu on the upper right corner, click on “Give Online”. Follow the prompts)

\*An amended distribution of communion during the worship service. We will employ a method that will limit cross-contamination.

\*Increased sanitation. We will do everything in our power to make sure surfaces and objects are disinfected. But we need YOU to help by washing your hands frequently in hot soapy water (especially after using the restroom), using hand sanitizer, and avoiding unnecessary contact with others.

\*PRAY!!! Pray for our nation, our world, our leaders, our healthcare workers, our students, and our brothers and sisters at high risk.

As we watch and wait, we can practice joy in the face of fear and uncertainty, because we know that our Redeemer LIVES! He will never leave us nor forsake us. Rest in that truth.

In His service,

Your elders and ministers