

Church Family at Valencia Presbyterian Church,

As concern about COVID-19 coronavirus continues to grow, here are some precautions we can take at Valencia Presbyterian Church.

As of today, there are no cases of COVID-19 coronavirus in western Pennsylvania, but these proactive steps can help us to be prepared whenever it comes to our region.

I've reviewed the **CDC suggestions for faith groups**, as well as the **Presbyterian Disaster Assistance guidelines for congregational responses** to coronavirus outbreak. I've also had the opportunity to chat with some other church leaders, who have provided excellent suggestions as well. Here are some informal guidelines for our church to use until our session is able to put together something more formal at its meeting on Tuesday.

1. Please remain home if you are not feeling well. We will miss having you as part of our fellowship, but we will hold you close to our hearts. You can go to the church's website to hear the sermon.
2. When you come to church, please first go to the restroom or kitchen to wash your hands. Please also wash your hands again when the time comes to leave.
3. Hugs and handshakes are a special part of our church life, but we will need a temporary substitute for the time being. I suggest that we greet each other by placing our hand on our heart (somewhat similar to what we do for the pledge of allegiance) as we smile and say hello. Your hand on your heart symbolizes the place in your heart that you have for the person you are greeting. It is a warmer greeting than the alternatives I've been hearing and reading about, such as elbow bumps and Star-Trek-style "live long and prosper" greetings.
4. After worship I will stand in the front of our sanctuary to greet anyone who wants to say hello, but this is a different place so that you won't feel awkward if you decide not to greet me. And, it will be a reminder to greet everyone differently. I will greet anyone with my hand over my heart!
5. Take advantage of the space in our sanctuary by sitting farther apart from each other than you usually do; preferably at least three to six feet apart if possible.
6. As the weather permits, we may decide to use the air conditioners in the sanctuary to increase air circulation.
7. If you must cough, please do so in your elbow instead of into your hand.
8. Promptly dispose of any tissues you use into a trash can.
9. As available, we will have hand sanitizer available for you to use. It is not a substitute for hand-washing, but it's better than nothing.
10. Avoid using the water fountain in the fellowship hall.

Our future plans will include other topics such as...

- upgrading our cleaning practices of frequently touched surfaces
- better options for on-line worship participation if you are unable to or decide not to attend worship

There is no reason for us to be panicked or alarmed, but it is wise for us to be prepared and proactive. God is still God, and we can trust in his care and guidance no matter what the future brings.

Serving in Christ with you,
Pastor Jim