March 5, 2020

Beloved St. Andrew community,

We want you to be aware that St. Andrew is committed to being proactive, reasonable, and instructive as we respond to a complex and rapidly evolving situation around the spread of the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) and the resulting infection, COVID-19 (from Corona Virus Disease 2019). The health and safety of our community and all of our partners who share the facility is paramount. Yet we also recognize that at the heart of our faith is life that is shared. We need to be together, even as we need to protect one another, and honor the choices of others—especially those who are most vulnerable to COVID-19 and other corona viruses. We trust we all will refrain from making judgment or taking offense in this time of anxiety.

Therefore, we do not anticipate “neglecting to meet together” (Hebrews 10:25), even as other organizations may choose to do so. At this point we plan to worship together weekly. We have and may cancel, reschedule or hold remotely other meetings. Exercising an abundance of caution, we have implemented additional preventative measures to reduce contamination and transmission, including these:

- We have temporarily contracted with Bounsy, our custodian, to add 30 minutes to each of the three days he works weekly, specifically to disinfect door handles, light switches, countertops and other frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- We have reached out to Manantial de Vida to communicate and coordinate our efforts.
- We have increased our diligence in cleaning the nursery, the kitchens, restrooms, and classrooms.
- We are taking extra precautions in preparing the communion elements and bringing them to the table.

We do encourage reasonable individual participation according to your best judgment. Among best practices for our concerns:

- If you are sick or think you may be infected, or if you have concerns, stay home.
- If you decide to stay home from worship or other events, please find ways to stay in touch. Reach out to one of the pastors, session members, or your deacon. We don’t want to create situations where those who are ill also feel lonely, isolated, or outcast. We want to pray for you and provide other forms of assistance and care as needed.
- Rather than use the water fountains, bring a filled reusable water bottle with you.
- During the passing of the peace, simply smile or bow or elbow touch or fist bump and share the peace without hugs or handshakes.
- When you come up for communion, rather than dip your bread in the common cup, take a pre-filled individual cup from the tray we are making available. Or come (with arms crossed across your chest) to receive a blessing instead.
- Come early, stay a little late, or volunteer an hour of your week to help us clean the kitchen, nursery, and other essential areas with extra care and diligence so we can maintain our commitment.
By now I trust you have been educating yourself on what we know and what we don’t know about the disease and best practices to prevent its spread. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention has stated that while the immediate health risk from COVID-19 is considered low for the general public in the United States, current global circumstances suggest it is likely that this virus will continue to spread and more US cases will be identified.

According to the CDC, there is still much to learn about the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) that causes COVID-19. Based on what is currently known, person-to-person contamination happens most frequently with close contacts (within about 6 feet). This type of transmission occurs via respiratory droplets. Transmission of COVID-19 to persons from surfaces contaminated with the virus has not been documented, but current evidence suggests that the virus may remain viable for hours to days on surfaces made from a variety of materials.

The CDC recognizes preventing and mitigating an outbreak as the most important strategy and recommends these common preventative measures.

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick and until you are fever-free for 24 hours without medication.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.

Above all, remember and rejoice that “nothing in life or in death can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Brief Statement of Faith; Romans 8:38-39).

Grace & Peace,

Scott Anderson
Pastor