



March 6, 2020

Dear Presbyterian Church of the Master,

We have been in conversation with many of you, as well as with colleagues across the country regarding how our congregation might best respond to the current outbreak of the COVID-19 coronavirus. Though there has been just one confirmed case in Orange County so far, it is wise for us all to be aware of the issues surrounding its transmission.

First: Please stay home from church and all other activities if you're feeling unwell or if you have been in contact with anyone who has a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19. Even mild illness can be passed on to others and result in much more severe cases in the elderly or those with underlying health conditions. If you are signed up to serve or volunteer at church, we will find someone else to step in.

If you miss Sunday worship, we encourage you to check out our [online sermon link](#) as well as join our church [Facebook group](#) to stay connected to our community virtually. If you would like a DVD of the week's full Sunday sanctuary worship service mailed to you at your home, just ask - we'd love to send it to you! (We don't yet have the capability to videotape the Awake service, but we are hoping to change this in the future.)

Second: We encourage everyone to forgo handshakes, fist bumps, and hugs before and after services, as well as during the time of greeting. We *love* that we're a warm, welcoming place, and we hope to return to our hugging and handshaking practices soon! For now, please refrain. We are looking to make hand sanitizer available in our pews as well. Since supplies of sanitizer are currently sold out almost everywhere, please bring your own in a purse or pocket if you can.

Third: [This bulletin insert from the United Church of Christ highlights some of the things we should each be doing.](#) As always, washing our hands regularly with soap and water for 20 seconds after coughing, sneezing, or touching public surfaces (door handles, counters, pens, tables) is paramount. 20 seconds is about the amount of time it takes to sing "Jesus Loves Me" or one verse of "Amazing Grace." It's also a great opportunity to spend a little time in prayer!

Finally, and most importantly: Jesus's call is clear - loving God and our neighbor means caring about bodies as well as souls. **Making small adjustments to our daily lives and weekly worship is one important way we can love those who are especially vulnerable.** As we adapt to more mindful ways of being together, we do so as an act of love for those who have been affected by the coronavirus and those who are most at risk of contracting a severe form of the illness.



While it is important to be wise, we also know that God does not call us to fear or panic. If you are feeling anxious, know that God is present to you and with you. Pastor Courtney is memorizing [Psalm 91](#) as part of her Lenten practice, and she invites you to join her in that if you choose. She also wrote [this reflection](#) on the comfort Jesus offers us.

We will continue to monitor the situation as things unfold. Our church website will have the most up-to-date information on any closures or cancellations, should they be necessary. At this point we do not anticipate that they will be.

All best,

Your pastors

Other helpful resources:

- [California Department of Public Health](#)
- [Orange County Public Health Information](#)
- [Advice for Churches from the Surgeon General](#)
- [CDC COVID-19 updates](#)
- [CDC New travel alerts](#)
- [World Health Organization updates](#)
- [WHO Preparedness resources](#)