

## Corona Virus Information

March 13, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Our country has been invaded by a virus – COVID-19 or coronavirus as it is more commonly called. It is here among us, but there is no cause for panic. Yes, it has changed the way we do things. It has canceled sporting events and canceled conventions. It has robbed us of our security.

What it cannot do is steal our souls. We belong to the Lord. He speaks to us through His prophet Isaiah for times such as these, **“Fear not, for I have redeemed you, I have called you by name, you are mine” (Isaiah 43:1b)**. We belong to the Lord. He will see us through this trial.

While we wait for this pandemic to pass, there are some commonsense precautions and preventatives we can take. The most effective way to stay healthy and minimize the spread of infectious disease is to use good health practices:

- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly (at least 20 seconds from fingertips to wrist).
- Cover-up a cough or sneeze using your elbow.
- Stay home when you are ill.

For everyone’s safety, there will be some changes in practice for St. John’s worship services and Bible studies. We encourage all to observe a safe social space by refraining from handshakes and hugging. Instead, we encourage a fist bump, or elbow bump for a greeting, including the pastor’s receiving line after service.

Regarding the Lord’s Supper, we will use individual cups exclusively instead of using the common cup for some who commune first.

These are simple, common sense measures we can use to help stop the spread of this virus. Trust me, when this pandemic passes (and it will) we can return to business as usual at St. John’s. This doesn’t mean that in the interim we will cease to be the friendly congregation that we are. Our greetings will just be a little different for the meantime. And communion will still be the body and blood of Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. That will never change until Jesus comes again!

It is important to remember that handling the spread of a serious contagion like the coronavirus is primarily a task for public health agencies. Any directives from the World Health Organization, CDC, or local governmental organizations should be followed.

Our congregation is prepared to alter our procedures and planning should the situation change. We will communicate any changes when appropriate.

Our partners in ministry at the Pacific Southwest District of the LCMS have created a section of their website to be a repository for COVID-19 information and updates. This repository can be accessed at [psd-lcms.org/coronavirus](https://psd-lcms.org/coronavirus). As new information and resources emerge, it will be updated for easy reference. We will place a link to this repository on the home page of St. John's website as well ([stjohnsfallon.org](https://stjohnsfallon.org)). Our thanks to our sister LCMS District.

Need I say that this pandemic and the country's response is a fast-changing situation. We will endeavor to alert you to any change in directive or practice from our church body or state and local government.

Meanwhile, we are still the Body of Christ here at St. John's. Things change, but our God and Savior does not.

**“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the sea... The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress” (Isaiah 46:1-2, 11).**

In His name,

Pastor Hilton