



Our Church's Response & Responsibility

[UPDATE]

March 13, 2020, 12:00 a.m.

Dear Sparkers,

Beginning **Sunday, March 15**, Spark will hold **services online** for the coming weeks. We will continue to monitor and assess, and will be in communication with the Spark community as to when services are again open to the public.

Please read below for details, and our plans to support you all during this trying season, as we aim to maintain our church community, connection, hope, and love.

WHY?

We want to say first and foremost, **there is no report of anyone within the Spark community who has been exposed to COVID-19. If you have contracted the virus or been exposed, and have been in attendance at Spark in any capacity, please let us know** so we can be diligent in our responsibility to our church and the broader civic community. There is no shame in exposure. We are sisters and brothers in Christ and we will continue to support one another through this season.

[The World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) has officially declared the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) a pandemic. It is incumbent upon all organizations to respond appropriately for the sake personal and global health. In accordance with the scientific and medical exhortation to practice social distancing, we are moving our services online.

As followers of Jesus, this decision is rooted primarily in our value of **love** for our neighbors as we strive to ["flatten the curve,"](#) in an effort to save the lives of those most vulnerable amongst us and supporting our local medical professionals and systems. While difficult, it is wise to take the necessary steps now to avoid the possibility of far more catastrophic consequences later. While our church falls well below [the recommended gathering number of Santa](#)

[Clara County Health](#), we believe the most reasonable and responsible action is to discontinue group gatherings during this time.

In addition to caring for our community *physically*, we also believe that this same **love** compels us to care for our souls as well. In addition to our “gathering” for worship on Sundays at our normally scheduled time, **we also want to encourage Sparkers to dream of creative ways in which we can love and encourage one another during this time.** Please read below for how we hope to accomplish this goal of connection.

HOW TO “ATTEND” SERVICES

The worship and teaching team will provide our regular service in our space at Congregation Etz Chayim. Join us online for our service, with songs, prayers, the children’s blessing, the number one commandment, and of course, the teaching.

This week we will again use Facebook Live on Spark’s Facebook page. In partnership with Congregation Etz Chayim, we may soon have professional streaming equipment and capabilities permanently installed that will provide multiple options for our future services.

All links will be posted to our home page at www.spark.church, and communicated through our Weekly email.

FULLY PARTICIPATE IN SERVICE...TOGETHER!

Even though we are not gathering centrally, it is our hope that families and small groups are able to watch together, finding ways to create sacred space in your homes as you join the livestream.

- While watching, please **interact with other Sparkers** online through comments and let us know you’re with us!
- **Prepare communion**, bread/matzah and juice/wine, for your small group to take together at the conclusion of the service. (The words of institution are included below).
- **Have dinner together** after service, giving space to reflect on the message and check in with one another.
- Don’t forget your dance moves when we do our **motion song!** ([Here’s a video of the Akhtar family from this last week](#)).

WORDS OF INSTITUTION for COMMUNION:

For in the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took the bread, blessed and broke it giving it to his disciples, saying, "Take, eat, this is my Body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." Likewise, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks and gave it to them saying, "Drink this, all of you. This is my Blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for you, and for many, for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

COMMUNITY CARE | Connect & Contribute

In addition to attending our online services, Sparkers can connect in these additional ways throughout the week.

- **Garden to Garden Bible Study** will continue through virtual meetings, Monday evenings at 7:25 p.m. Gardeners, please check your weekly emails for updates on how to join the meetings. If you would like to join Garden, you are welcome to start now! Simply email kevin@spark.church stating you'd like to join!
- **Contact the Pastors to connect.** Pastors Danielle, Kevin and the entire pastoral team, would love to connect with you, especially during this time. Please email us to set up FaceTime or phone appointments. Please also just let us know how you're generally doing, or to share a story that is meaningful during this time.
- **Small Groups, Book Clubs & Bible Studies.** Feeling disconnected, anxious or isolated? Or just bored? Parents with kiddos at home looking to connect? Do you have ideas on how to keep them entertained? We need online group facilitators. Please contact us with your idea and we'll connect you with our [Zoom.us](https://zoom.us) account and publicize your meeting to the church. Please contact kevin@spark.church and we will let everyone know!
- **Connect errand needs with available Sparkers.** If you need or know of someone who could use assistance during this time, please let us know. If you're able to run an errand or two for another Sparker who is in need, please let us know. We'll get you connected!
- **Pray.** You may submit a prayer request to prayer@spark.church. We also encourage you to take time to connect with God.
- Sign up to receive **text messages from Spark.** In addition to our email, we will use text messaging to periodically update and connect with Sparkers.

Need technical support? Sparker Eric Schmidt has so thoughtfully offered his services to any Sparker who may need technical assistance to join Spark activities and events online. Eric has been doing this work for several years now

through [Heart of the Valley \(www.servicesforseniors.org\)](http://www.servicesforseniors.org), a nonprofit volunteer organization helping seniors 65 years or older in West Santa Clara Valley. Thank you Eric! (Would you like to help Eric in these efforts? Please contact kevin@spark.church, and we can add you to the team!)

LIVING THE WAY OF JESUS THROUGH OUR VALUES



Times like these refine again our understanding of what it means to **Live The Way of Jesus**. We confess again our commitment to our core values, and actively look for ways in which those values can live. Our **Rescue** Team has reached out to our local partners serving the most vulnerable in our community. [WeHOPE](#) in East Palo Alto has listed the following amongst their primary needs:

- Hand sanitizer
- Hygiene supplies
- Tide pods
- Socks
- Disposable latex gloves (nitrile 6 mm)
- Masks
- Undergarments
- Ponchos
- Financial donations.
- Prayer for our homeless brothers and sisters

We will persist in elevating the **reputation** of God as compassionate, loving, and empathetic. We will work towards **reconciling** ourselves with this world broken with disease, and with one other who are often divided by demeaning rhetoric. And we will continue to believe that **resurrection** to a new life is possible, even after death. In this season, we anticipate experiencing the many ways in which Jesus will surprise us, bring us hope, joy, and connection out of our fear, anxiety, and isolation.

In a time when “social distancing” is the right response to a virus, **let us lean into “community care and connection” as the right response that followers of Jesus have to times such as these.**

Thank you, Spark community, for being amazing! Thanks to all of you who have reached out with information, updates, or notes of encouragement. We appreciate it all.

Stay healthy, friends.

**In Christ's Love & Service,
Kevin & Danielle**