



COVID-19

Our Church's Response & Responsibility

March 6, 2020, 11:05 p.m.

Beloved Spark Community,

We are actively monitoring the "Coronavirus"/COVID-19 news and situation. Please read below for our response and responsibility as a church community.

Start With Good Information

The first and most important responsibility is to begin with good and trustworthy information and to stay up to date with the developments as they arise. Panic and misinformation must be combated to ensure that we are being wise and effective in our practices as we join our civic community in protecting the public's health.

The agencies and websites we are closely monitoring are [The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), [The World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#), [Santa Clara County Public Health \(SCCPH\)](#), and [San Mateo County Health \(SMCH\)](#). We are paying attention to the news and updates as they arise, and will respond accordingly. In addition, we have sought counsel from a Spark member who is a doctor, and we welcome additional insights and perspectives from Sparkers who bring expertise to bear on our understanding.

Properly Understand

From the most recent reports, we understand the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties combined to be under 30, though we expect that number to rise. We understand that the risk of contagion remains low and the seriousness of the disease is relative to an individual's personal health demographic, including pre-existing conditions and age. The number of people currently contracting the disease in our counties is extremely low in comparison to our population, and the vast majority of the people who do contract the disease do not become seriously ill.

"At this time, most people in the United States will have little immediate risk of exposure to this virus. This virus is NOT currently spreading widely in the United States." (March 3, 2020, cf. [CDC](#))

"I want to remind the public that the vast majority of people who become infected with COVID-19 do not become seriously ill, and fully recover. We are making these recommendations to protect the most vulnerable members of our community from the virus, and slow its spread," (March 5, 2020, Dr. Sara Cody, County Public Health Officer, [SCCPH](#))

Sunday Services Continue...For Now

At the current time (Friday, March 6, 11:05 p.m.), we believe continuing to meet does not pose a serious health risk to our community, and so we will be gathering on Sundays for our worship services. We will be communicating and encouraging our church to implement a few changes for good public health practices as recommended. And we do not believe there is any reason to panic or take drastic measures, though we will remain proactive and precautionary.

Please note: Should there be developments that give us good reason that gatherings will compromise the public health of our community, we will not hesitate to cancel services with prompt and thorough communication.

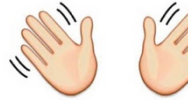
Healthy Practices

We are encouraging everyone in our church to please consider the following:

- If you are sick, elderly, or have respiratory vulnerabilities, please consider staying home and avoiding public contact.
- If you have recently returned from a region with travel advisories associated with ongoing COVID-19 infections, or have been in close contact with someone who has, please stay home and monitor your health according to the instructions of public health officials (a minimum of 14 days monitoring).
- If children are showing any cold or flu symptoms (runny/stuffy nose, etc.), please consider keeping them at home.

As we gather for public services, please attend to the following practices:

- Upon arrival, please wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. ([Here's a 2 minute CDC video on washing hands](#)).

- Always cover your cough or sneeze, away from people, and ideally into a napkin or paper towel that you immediately discard. Afterward, please wash hands with soap and water.
- Greet one another with “jazz hands.” **Please avoid shaking hands or hugs during this time, and do not take offense if someone declines your kind gesture of a physical greeting.** 
- Please use hand sanitizer before helping yourself to the hospitality table.
- As much as possible, all children will be encouraged to follow the same practices during their service. If your child shows symptoms of illness when in the Spark Kids service, we may ask you to take your child out of our enclosed classroom to limit exposure.

The following items will change during this season:

- The setup team and staff will make wiping down surfaces with anti-bacterial wipes a part of our setup routine. This includes children’s toys and equipment.
- Our hospitality table will begin serving pre-packaged “single serve” items.
- Communion will no longer be done by intinction (the dipping of the bread into the juice), but by single serve cups and single-serve gluten-free wafers.

Live Streaming Services

To assist with those who wish to still “attend” services remotely, we are working on a livestreaming solution that will be accessible to Sparkers as a temporary solution. Our website and email distribution list will be our main avenues of communication for that link.

The Way of Jesus and Infectious Diseases

As followers of Jesus, we feel it important to advance a way of being in this world that is in accordance with our core values.

In recent news we have seen religious figures such as Jim Bakker peddle false and misleading information and products as a cure for the Coronavirus. We have also seen testimonies of racial violence against Chinese people, as well as racially charged rhetoric about China and Chinese culture. These, and other examples of human depravity, do not reflect the Way of Jesus. Our theological and historical study has taught us that followers of Jesus exemplify love and compassion as our grounding principles. Our reconciliation and rescue values encourage us to seek the best and most accurate understandings for the sake of healing and restoration. And our resurrection value moves us to pray for

those families and loved ones who have suffered loss due to this disease. It is this kind of response that advances a different reputation of God in this world, a reputation of care and concern for all humans in all of their humanity. We will continue to be that kind of church, those kinds of representatives of Jesus in this world as we speak against racism and falsehood, and speak for truth, wisdom, compassion, mercy, and justice.

We wish to express our deepest sympathies to those around the world who have lost loved ones to the disease, and we pray for God's shalom to be upon them. We are praying for and supporting the medical, scientific, and public health officials who are working diligently on our behalf. We express gratitude to God for them, and honor them in their work.

Thank you for being a church community that cares deeply about these matters, thinks carefully about our response, and attends diligently to our responsibilities. We will be in touch with any further developments as is warranted.

Should you have any questions, as always please don't hesitate to contact us.

In Christ's Love & Service,
On Behalf of the Spark Community,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin", with a stylized, cursive script.

Pastor Kevin
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