

Managing COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship, Goshen, IN

March 5, 2020

As part of our desire to be disciples of Jesus in this faith community, we want to care for each other in preparation for a possible outbreak of the coronavirus. Our intention is to help people in our congregation and community stay as healthy as possible. At this time in the United States, the threat to the general public for contracting COVID-19 remains low but is expected to grow and is evolving rapidly. For the latest information, we encourage you to visit the [CDC](#) and [Indiana Department of Health](#) webpages.

How Does COVID-19 Spread?

The current understanding is that COVID-19 spreads mainly through person-to-person contact.

1. Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet), with closer proximity and longer duration of contact increasing risk.
2. Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These droplets can land in the mouths, noses, or eyes of people who are nearby, or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.
3. Spread from contact with contaminated surfaces or objects, including your hands. You likely can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching your own mouth, nose, or eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

Can I Spread the Virus without Being Sick?

1. You are probably the most contagious when you are most symptomatic, but spread from people without symptoms appears possible.
2. You might be able to spread the virus before showing symptoms or after symptoms resolve. Also, the majority of people infected will have a mild illness and possibly show no symptoms at all.

How Can I Care for Myself and My Household?

The most important thing you can do is stay home if you or someone in your household is sick. The pastors give you permission to skip church and stay home if you're sick. (How often have you heard pastors tell you to skip church?!) If a member of your household is sick, you might also want to stay home. The virus is highly contagious and most cases are very mild.

1. Stay home when you are sick with even mild respiratory symptoms (coughing, sneezing, wheezing, etc.) or a fever.
2. Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue, then throw it in a trash can and immediately clean your hands. If you don't have a tissue then cough into the crook of your elbow rather than your hands.
3. 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 available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with 60%-95% alcohol.
4. Routinely clean frequently touched surfaces and objects using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe. This includes tabletops, doorknobs, faucet and toilet handles, phones, computer mice and keyboards (when shared with others), etc.

5. If you develop fever, cough, and difficulty breathing, seek medical advice promptly since this may be due to a respiratory infection or other serious condition. Call your health provider in advance of going to the office.
6. If you are sick, as much as possible, you should stay in a specific room and away from other people and pets in your home. Also, you should use a separate bathroom, if available. Do not share cups or eating utensils.

Caring for the Congregation

We encourage you to stay in communication with each other and with us! This is a time for us to lean into our relationships as a congregation, even if that means being more creative about how we connect.

If and when COVID-19 disease comes to our area, the pastors and commissions may decide to implement any or all of the following.

1. Modify our Sunday morning activities to minimize the risk of spreading illness. Depending on the context, this could include:
 - a. Asking greeters to hold signs of welcome rather than shaking your hand.
 - b. Bringing your own coffee to church rather than pushing the pump on the communal air pots, or alternatively, sanitizing your hands after using one of the pots.
 - c. Having the offering at the end of worship so you can drop your contribution into a receptacle on the way out, then providing gloves for the offering counters.
 - d. Asking children to stay in their seats for the children's story rather than gathering at the front.
 - e. Changing the way we do rituals such as anointing, footwashing, and communion.
 - f. The pastors will continue to greet you at the exit after worship, but will not shake your hand.
 - g. Putting hand sanitizer in the fellowship hall and in every classroom.
 - h. Asking parents to bring snacks for their children during worship, then serve no snacks in children's nurture classes.
 - i. Having worship but not Christian education.
 - j. Spreading out chairs during worship services and Christian education.
 - k. Have masks available for congregants who come to church coughing or sneezing although our preference would be for you to return home.
 - l. Other ideas we haven't thought of yet.
2. Cancel Sunday morning or midweek events.
3. Experiment with recording sermons on video and posting them to our website or uploading them to Google Drive.
4. Hold committee meetings by phone or video call.
5. Conducting pastoral visits with sick congregants virtually, rather than face-to-face.

Developed using guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and the World Health Organization, in consultation with Daniel Nafziger, M.D., M.P.H., medical director at Goshen Hospital and infectious disease specialist, and Paul Fast, M.P.H., Global Health Coordinator for Mennonite Central Committee