



COMMON SENSE AND THE CORONA VIRUS

Dear Members and Friends of First Presbyterian Church,

The famous French philosopher of the Enlightenment, Voltaire, is often credited with the observation that “common sense is not so common.” Whoever said it first, however, helps remind us that an enduring faith in our triune God calls us to extraordinary, and often rare, self-control as we resist the winds of panic and hysteria and, instead, search for truth, common sense, and good judgment.

None of us should take the corona virus *or any form of disease* lightly. We should guard our health and those of others, known and unknown to us, so as to avoid tragic illness. In doing so, we should behave rationally, thoughtfully, and sensibly.

Based on what we know so far, we are not going to suspend church meetings, choir practices, worship services, the Presbyterian Day School, or any other activities of the church unless and until it becomes apparent that a more drastic response is warranted.

Nevertheless, considering the growing concerns about COVID-19 outbreaks around the world, we will be taking some extra precautions in worship this Sunday and in the coming weeks. In the paragraphs below, I have taken large excerpts from an email I received from the Rev. Bill Cotman, Pastor at First Presbyterian Church of

Cuero. What he has told his congregation is wise, well considered, and needs no embellishment by me. I am grateful for the leadership that Rev. Cotman has shared with us, and I commend it to your attention as I modify it to the circumstances of FPC of Victoria.

As of today, we know that there are more than 90,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 worldwide and over 1,700 in the United States. The World Health Organization has declared this a pandemic. We will not let fear and panic overwhelm us, but we will be responsible in how we continue to gather at FPC of Victoria.

Sunday School and Worship Service will proceed as planned this weekend at 9:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. as usual. The choir will gather at 10:00 a.m.

We have plenty of room in our sanctuary, so we ask that people spread out in worship and greet one another in a sensitive manner. Those who prefer smiles, elbow bumps, and “air hugs” should not be reluctant to say so, and the rest of us will be respectful and understanding of such requests. Before we pass the offering plates during the Offertory, we will wipe them with sanitizer. If you wish to pass the plate by using a handkerchief, you are welcome to do so. Also, we will have hand sanitizer in the narthex for use before and after worship.

As you always do, continue to wash your hands well and avoid touching your face after sneezing or coughing. Carry a handkerchief or Kleenex. To lighten things up a bit, we found this helpful reminder on the Internet.

*Wash YOUR HANDS and
say your PRAYERS 'cause
Jesus and Germs
ARE EVERYWHERE!*

Finally, if you are feeling unwell or have recently been exposed to somebody who is feeling unwell, please do not feel guilty about staying home from worship this week. We want you to rest and recover, and we want to protect the most vulnerable members of our community from becoming infected with any illness.

As the Rev. Cotman said in the email to his church, these are all temporary solutions to what we hope is a temporary concern, and we look forward to returning to our “normal” worship practices soon. Thank you for taking the health of our

neighbors seriously, and please reach out to the church office if you have any questions or concerns.

I close with a prayer from Psalm 103:1-5, which I offer as our collective expression of confidence in our God-- our creator, redeemer, healer, and protector throughout the ages:

*Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and all that is within me,
bless his holy name.*

*Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and do not forget all his benefits—
who forgives all your iniquity,
who heals all your diseases,
who redeems your life from the Pit,
who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,
who satisfies you with good as long as you live
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.*

Faithfully yours,

Pastor Jim



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