

Our Response to the Coronavirus at Grace

This week finds us, like everyone else, scrambling to respond appropriately to the anxiety related to the coronavirus. A month ago, this was nowhere on the radar of Americans. Now you can't go two minutes without hearing of the ramifications of the virus and its impact on our world. Recently I heard on the radio that this is a health issue, an economic issue and a social issue, but there was no mention of a spiritual issue. People without hope live in fear and people in fear do desperate things.

I would bring to you, when people living in fear of getting sick, losing money in stocks and in business and sent into places of self-isolation, that there is a spiritual problem. When people storm the stores in search of antibacterial solution, authorities call off schools, postpone weddings, when worship gatherings are being limited, there is a spiritual problem.

Two weeks ago, I read an article from a Doctor in SC who said he has been in all kinds of countries where virus and disease was rampant and that he was not afraid of the coronavirus, but he was afraid of the fear and panic that would be brought on by people as they responded to the virus. The media is a wonderful thing when it shares the facts about health concerns but living in fear and anxiety and constant bombardment of warnings is a spiritual problem. Casting people into hopelessness, depression and anxiety is not of God. We know that Jesus is the giver of a peace that passes understanding. This peace in God has taken us through wars, through rumors of wars, taken us through earthquakes, and floods, through genocide situations in other countries, diseases like the great plagues of history and more recently the Ebola Virus. His peace sees us through our triumphs, our follies and through our valleys, even though death. His peace will see us through this virus.

We might ask ourselves, what can we do to bring community and hope to those in fear around us? What can we do in missions right now for those who are in isolation and some who are economically struggling to make it because of the coronavirus? I would love to hear your thoughts and see your responses.

With increasing numbers of virus cases in SC, we are all struck by the possibility of this getting out of hand. So we are doing our best. The CDC, DEHEC, the Governor, the President and now the Bishop are calling for churches to not meet on Sunday mornings live right now.

At Grace UMC, all small groups (over 10) and non-essential meetings, meals, and public open Worship Services have been postponed or cancelled until March 31st. We will however be Live Streaming Worship Services on Sundays at 10am from the Wesley Center on 3/21 and hopefully, from the Sanctuary on 3/29. We are in the process of upgrading our capabilities to do so more effectively. I hope each of you who can will participate in viewing this Sunday Live Stream of the next few weeks from Grace. And please remember to support Grace with your giving during these Sundays we miss through online giving and/or through the mail. To join our online giving family, go to <https://app.securegive.com/GraceUMC>. Look to our web site and Grace's Facebook group page for announcements, opportunities to connect and for the future plan beyond March 31st.

On 3/18 we are releasing a video/devotional (on our website) about Faith in the midst of fear as well as some announcements in this newsletter article. May God Bless and keep us in His will, in health, in strength to serve, in love with one another and in love with God who sees us through.

My advice to each of you, continue to live your life in faith. Follow the precautions that are given within reason but strive not to live in fear and anxiety. Hold your loved ones tight! Read your bible. (Psalm 100, 46, 121 and John 15) After 10 minutes of watching your TV for an update, turn it off. Pray for those who are working on an antivirus. Pray for our leaders, our President, the CDC and our Bishop, the Church and for all of those in isolation, sickness and fear around us.