

## Update on Whitestone COVID-19 (Coronavirus Disease) Response

Date: March 17, 2020

The elders, pastors and Worship Team leader met Sunday afternoon, March 15, to review and plan how we should be responding to the spreading coronavirus. We began by reminding ourselves of **Jesus' admonition to not be anxious**. His words to the disciples seem very appropriate at this time, "Do not let your hearts be troubled; neither let them be afraid. My peace I give you -- not as the world gives, do I give it to you." John 14:27. Knowing we are in God's hands is a comfort, indeed.

Sunday's first **live-streaming worship service** experience was reviewed and given a very positive assessment. A total of 138 units utilized the service, and a variety of affirming 'live-chat' responses were shared. Keeping the offering time was a good idea, as church expenses continue even as we make these changes. Please continue to mail in your offerings to the church, bring them during office hours, or put them under the office door after hours.

We noted institutional responses at places of work, including Showalter Villa, Hesston College, and saw how seriously everyone is taking this threat. We concluded that we would continue our live-stream only worship service for the next several Sundays. We made a broader decision to **cancel all church group activities through April 4, 2020**. We will re-evaluate during the week of March 30 whether to extend the cancellation. This means that in addition to not having on-campus worship services, we will not be having Sunday School, MYF, JYF, Connect, Mennonite Women/quilting, Men's Bible Study, potlucks/meals. We will not have off-campus group meetings, and we are also postponing other organization's use of the building until further notice.

**Visitation Team** will not be making in-person visits at this time. Phone calls and cards will be the main way of staying in touch. Hospital visits will be by phone.

We will keep **normal church office hours** for now. We request that anyone coming to the church office wash their hands or use the sanitizer before entering the office.

A **thorough cleaning of the building** is currently being done. Areas of the building that have been cleaned will be marked with caution tape in an effort to keep these areas clean. Access to mailboxes and the church office will still be available. Anyone with any cold-like symptoms (fever, coughing, sneezing, achiness) is asked to not enter the building. Any of the elders would be glad to deliver any church mail to your house.

Elders/pastors are very eager to know of **any prayer requests and needs** you have. Please email, text or call. Since anyone over 60 or who has a compromised health situation is discouraged from being in crowds, elders/volunteers are offering to pick up groceries, or prescriptions, for example; or show you how to order groceries online. Do let us or the church office know. We will be incorporating prayer requests in the Sunday morning service, inviting people to text, email or live chat the requests. Keep in mind that these will be publically available.

**Funerals.** Should a need for a funeral arise, we will ask the family, in the case of cremation, to postpone the service to a safe time; and in the case of a burial, that it be a private burial with a memorial service at a later time.

What an unusual time we are in! Since we are in the season of Lent, when people often give up something, may we receive these unwanted and un-chosen losses as an occasion to draw close to the Lord.

Sincerely,

Elders and Pastors