

Dear Members and Friends of Trinity,

I'm writing in response to the news that Maryland health officials have confirmed the state's first three cases of Coronavirus.

Our congregational mission statement reminds us of our commitment to each other: "Trinity's mission is to challenge both ourselves and our communities to share the Good News of the Kingdom of God through acts of mercy and justice, compassion and love,..."

We are seeking to balance the importance of community (being together) with care for each other (protecting ourselves and others from contracting or spreading this disease).

Maintaining Health Phase: "Stay Calm & Wash Your Hands"

We are currently in a "maintaining health" phase. As a result, I am asking each of you to please take precautions to keep yourself and other members of our Trinity family safe. This approach includes the following best practices, drawn directly from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines:

- Stay home and call your doctor if you develop symptoms or have been in close contact with a person known to have coronavirus. Reported illnesses have ranged from mild symptoms to severe illness and death for confirmed cases. The following symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure: Fever, Cough, Shortness of breath.
- Wash your hands often with soap and hot water for at least 20 seconds, especially after using the bathroom, before eating, and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash. (Then wash your hands!) If a tissue is not available, cough or sneeze into the bend of your elbow.
- Refrain from handshakes and hugs. We'll explore a variety of alternative greetings such as the "namaste" bow used in many meditation traditions or placing your hand over your heart to symbolize a felt sense of connection.
- Take care of yourself: support your immune system by prioritizing sleep, eating healthy, drinking fluids, exercising, engaging in spiritual practices (meditation, yoga, etc.) and other activities that help you manage stress.
- Trinity's Ushers: out of an abundance of caution, we will be asking our ushers to help the congregation with the offering by guiding people to the front of the church to present their offerings, and to allow each person to pick up their own Order of Service.

Trinity will increase the frequency of cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces.

CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a face mask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including coronavirus. Face masks should be used by people who show symptoms of coronavirus to help prevent the spread of the disease to others.

Disruption Phase

If a widespread outbreak occurs in our area, Trinity will follow state and federal recommendations (and common sense). We will also explore ways of allowing staff to telecommute by providing services, programs, and meetings electronically -- such as through Facebook Live, Zoom Video Conferencing, etc.

Rebuilding Community Phase

When all restrictions are lifted, we will resume our regular activities and continue our ongoing commitment to building the beloved community.

Avoid Misinformation

Please be aware that there is misinformation about the coronavirus on social media, email, and other platforms. We strongly encourage you to pay attention to the guidelines from trusted sources, particularly:

- Center for Disease Control and Prevention, available at cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV. Pay particular attention on the left-hand side of that page to the column labeled "What You Should Know" -- which includes links to webpages on "How it spread," "Symptoms," "Prevention & Treatment," "Testing," and "Frequently Asked Questions."
- Health Organization, available at who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019.

We will continue to send updates by email as more information becomes available. This letter (as well as any future updated version) will also be available on the homepage of our website: Trinityfrederick.org.

Most importantly, thank you for your care, caution, and concern for our Church family during this time. And, as always, I am grateful to be on this journey with all of you.

In Christ's Service,

Pastor Eliezer

The Rev. Dr. Eliezer Valentín-Castañón, Senior Pastor