

March 14, 2020

Rising Sun Family:

We are all concerned about the coronavirus pandemic and its impact on our daily lives. Indeed, it also weighs heavily on our church ministry activities and fellowship. I am writing to assure you that we are taking every precaution to safeguard you and all who worship in our facilities.

Consistent with governmental guidelines, our sexton is taking extra care to disinfect commonly touched surfaces such as door handles, bannisters and bathroom fixtures before and after all services. On last Sunday our Trustee Ministry shared a list of practices we are employing and that you should use to prevent getting and spreading the virus. Attached is another helpful bulletin with tips for safeguarding your health.

We have already employed some cautionary worship practices such as having the ushers “hold” the offering plate, rather than “pass” the plate, thus minimizing the number of hands that touch it. We have also discouraged holding hands during prayer and other worship activity.

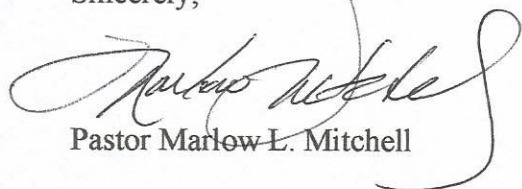
Consistent with the March 13, 2020 Emergency Rulemaking on “mass gatherings” by the DC Department of Health, many congregations with 250 or more members are required to cancel services. Fortunately, we are a small congregation not impacted by that ruling and can easily adopt the recommendation of social distancing during service. Therefore, we will be open on Sunday, March 14.

I understand that some of you, particularly some of our older members, have chronic respiratory health conditions that make you susceptible to colds and viruses such as the flu and the coronavirus and that it may be in your best interest to stay home. We will pray for your protection and strength. We will also attempt to make a portion of the service available to you via a live broadcast on Facebook.

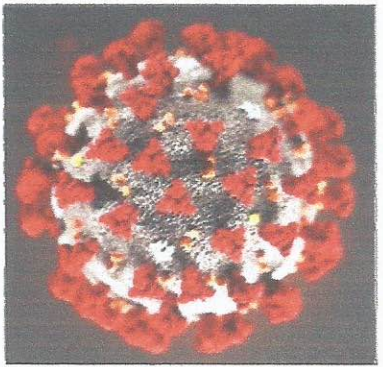
With regard to our upcoming ministry activities, the following decisions have been made: Although the Emergency Rulemaking on Mass Gatherings excludes nursing homes, we will cancel our bi-monthly nursing home worship service this month. For our Clothing and Feeding Open House, we will provide our guests with masks and latex gloves as they enter the parsonage. (If one of our guests is carrying the virus, this practice should prevent its transmission while with us.) Finally, as of today, Pastor Davis and Grace United Baptist Church plan to have its anniversary services on March 22, 2020 at which we are the featured guest. However, as this pandemic is very fluid, we will closely monitor conditions in the days leading up to the service and make any needed adjustments.

Please know that the safety of our church family during this pandemic is our highest priority. We will do all that we can to prevent the spread of the virus in our church community. At the same time, we will continue to honor our commitment to God and to our community-- to be the House of Refuge, the calming presence for God's people who are hurting, grieving and in need of healing during these perilous times. We will meet both challenges because God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marlow Mitchell", with a large, stylized flourish extending from the end of the signature.

Pastor Marlow L. Mitchell



Coronavirus and the Church

As new cases of the coronavirus (CoVid-19) are reported in the United States and around the world, the church is called to education, caution and common sense. Here are a few basic guidelines for congregations.

Good hygiene helps prevent the spread not only of coronavirus but also of colds and flu!

- Members, ministers, ushers - wash your hands frequently – with soap and water and for at least 20 seconds.
- Sneeze or cough into the crook of your elbow or a tissue, not your hand. Wash immediately after coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose.
- Avoid touching your face, especially your mouth, nose and eyes, with unwashed hands.
- Regularly disinfect surfaces frequently touched including keyboards, desktops, elevator buttons and door knobs.
- Use hand sanitizer.
- Avoid close contact with someone who is sick.
- Stay home if you are sick.

Feel free to “bump elbows” or bow to fellow congregants during passing of the peace instead of hugging or shaking hands. Support changes in offertory and communion practices that

minimize the chance of spreading germs. For example, ushers can keep hold of the offering plate; for communion, individual (even disposable) communion cups can be used. Coronavirus (CoVid-19) is a respiratory illness that causes flu-like symptoms including fever, vomiting and difficulty breathing.

- If you have any of these symptoms, seek medical advice.
- Call ahead before you go to a doctor’s office or emergency room. Tell them about any recent travel and your symptoms.
- Stay home. Do not travel while sick. Avoid contact with others.
- Ask to join meetings via video or telephone conference call while you are recovering. Join worship via livestream.

Helpful links:

- Short educational video on the “5 Things to Know About COVID-19” <https://youtu.be/2OKr53uXhS4>
- Latest guidance from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) at: <http://cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019ncov/index.html>
- More resources from UCC Disaster Ministries: [ucc.org/disaster coronavirus resources from the ucc](http://ucc.org/disaster_coronavirus_resources_from_the_ucc)

As the faith community, we have a special responsibility to care for our fellow congregants and communities. When we are prepared, we are in a better position to help others. Get the facts and restate them accurately. Check in frequently with our fellow congregants. And counter scapegoating such as already has been shown to some Chinese and Chinese-Americans. They are not to blame for the coronavirus!