

March 13, 2020

### **Coronavirus and How to Be the Church**

Dear LVHPC church family,

As news continues to track the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus, I want to take a moment to speak to you clearly as fellow sisters and brothers in Christ.

At this time health experts tell us what is most important for community health is social distancing. This helps to protect those who are most vulnerable in our communities and it helps our health care system by slowing the spread of the virus. The more stringent the distancing, the greater its effect. **For these reasons, the campus of La Verne Heights Presbyterian Church will be closed through the end of March.** Session will continue to assess the situation as it develops.

The closure means that all worship services, meetings, and programs are suspended through the end of the month. All outside groups that use the campus are being notified. The Church Office will also be closed. During this time the church staff will be working from home. If you need to get in touch with someone from the office, e-mail them or call the church's main number and leave a message.

In this time of fear and uncertainty, we have the opportunity to bear living witness to the good news of God in Jesus Christ. We do so by responding in a manner that reflects the greatest commandment—to love God and our neighbor as ourselves. As we seek to BE THE CHURCH, I invite us all to the following practices: prayer, prevention, and participation.

#### **PRAY**

2 Timothy 1:7 reminds us that “God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”

- Join Session in praying for comfort and healing for those who have contracted the virus (2 *Corinthians 1:3–4*).
- Join Session in praying for emergency responders, healthcare workers, and leaders who are on the front lines of providing care and decision-making (1 *Timothy 2:1–4*).
- Join Session in praying for the global Church to have courage and to always be prepared to give a reason for the hope that is within them (1 *Peter 3:15*).
- Join Session in praying for our communities and the health and welfare of all our fellow citizens (*Jeremiah 29:7*).

#### **PREVENT**

You are encouraged to continue standard best practices to mitigate the spread of colds, flu, and other contagious viruses. This will help to protect you and those closest to you. At the same time, as Philippians 2:4 reminds us, we are called to “not only look out for our own interests but the interests of others.” The following best practices and recommendations are actually a way to follow Jesus, and we encourage you to follow these guidelines:

- **Stay home when you are sick.** We encourage everyone to be fever-free, without the use of fever-reducing medication, for 24 hours before entering any public space.
- **Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.** Encourage others to do the same.
- **Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.**
- **Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue or bent elbow.**
- **When greeting friends use a wave or an elbow bump** instead of a handshake.
- **Use disinfectant on surfaces that are common points of contact.**
- **Stay home as much as possible.** This helps to protect those who are most vulnerable in our communities by slowing the spread of the virus.
- **Make sure information you are sharing is from knowledgeable sources.** The [Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) and [Los Angeles County](#) health agencies have up-to-date information on their websites, which we encourage you to visit for detailed information. Any directives from the CDC and local governments should be followed.

## **PARTICIPATE**

Now is the time for each of us to participate in our communities. BE A GOOD NEIGHBOR. Take time to check-in on your neighbors and friends, especially those who are elderly, sick, or who may not have anyone else checking-in on them. Pick up the phone and give them a call regularly to make sure they're doing ok. Talk with people and pray for them—for wisdom and for peace.

The staff is already looking into how we might continue to be a church community remotely during this extended period of separation. We will update you as plans develop.

As Hebrews 10:39 reminds us, “we are not among those who shrink back and so are lost, but among those who have faith and so are saved.” Let’s BE THE CHURCH with courage, with humility, with wisdom, and with hope!

With resurrection joy,

Pastor Jonathan & your Session