



# THE CHURCH GUIDE TO **CORONAVIRUS**

How congregations can prepare for the  
potential disruption and gospel opportunities

**OUTREACH**



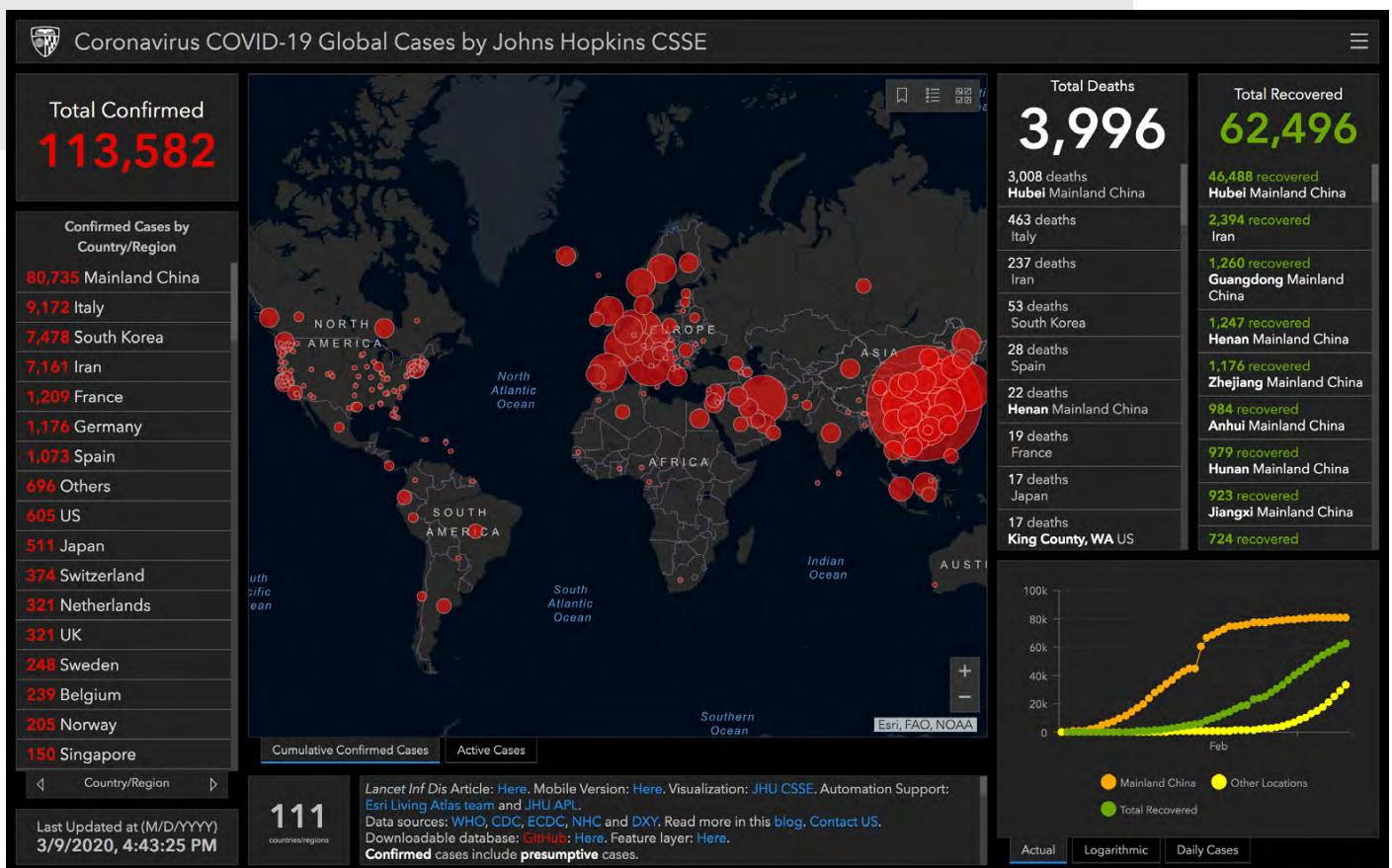
**TO SHARE IDEAS WITH OTHER CHURCHES  
AND RECEIVE IMMEDIATE UPDATES, JOIN  
THE CHURCH AND THE CORONAVIRUS  
FACEBOOK GROUP.**

*As COVID-19 (the disease caused by the new coronavirus SARS-CoV-2) continues to spread outside of the epicenter in China, churches would be wise to have a Coronavirus Response Operating Procedure in place. This is why [ChurchLeaders.com](https://www.churchleaders.com), [SermonCentral.com](https://www.sermoncentral.com), [OutreachMagazine.com](https://www.outreachmagazine.com) (under the umbrella of [Outreach.com](https://www.outreach.com)) have created *The Church Guide to Coronavirus*.\**

*It is no understatement to say that the church faces a great challenge in the recent outbreak of COVID-19. First reported in Wuhan, China, on December 31, 2019, the coronavirus has shut down cities in Iran, Italy, and South Korea and is currently spreading in the United States. The virus has made an impact on our world from international travel to the global markets. Businesses and industries are experiencing declining attendance, customers, and revenue. The church will not be immune from these impacts.*

*The threat of a pandemic also creates an opportunity for the church. People will be more open to the gospel than ever before. Will your church be ready to provide services, to speak hope, to trust in God heroically? Or will your church shrink back in fear and self-protection? Our hope and prayer is that this guide can help your church develop healthy practices to keep your church attenders safe and to rise up valiantly in these days.*

# THIS IS THE MOST UP-TO-DATE LIVE MAP ON WHAT IS HAPPENING WITH THE VIRUS.



# HOW YOUR CHURCH CAN PREPARE FOR CORONAVIRUS-RELATED DISRUPTIONS

If your church has not created a Coronavirus Response Operating Procedure, now is the time to do that. Consider these CDC recommendations as you create your plan:

- Ensure the plan is flexible and involves your church leadership and staff in developing and reviewing your plan.
- Conduct a focused discussion or exercise using your plan, to find out ahead of time whether the plan has gaps or problems that need to be corrected.
- Share your plan with church staff and leadership.
- Share best practices with other churches to improve community response efforts.
- Review the [CDC's guidance for businesses and employers](#).

## POSSIBLE DISRUPTION #1: Temporary Closure of Church Services

The U.S. government has the right to [shut down church services](#) of a certain size. According to the Centers for Disease Control on February 8, 2020:

*Public health orders are legally enforceable directives issued under the authority of a relevant federal, state, or local entity that, when applied to a person or group, may place restrictions on the activities undertaken by that person or group, potentially including movement restrictions or a requirement for monitoring by a public health authority, for the purposes of protecting the public's health. Federal, state, or local public health orders may be issued to enforce isolation, quarantine or conditional release. The list of quarantinable communicable diseases for which federal public health orders are authorized is defined by Executive Order and includes "severe acute respiratory syndromes." COVID-19 meets the*

*definition for “severe acute respiratory syndromes” as set forth in Executive Order 13295, as amended by Executive Order 13375 and 13674, and, therefore, is a federally quarantinable communicable disease.*

When a federally quarantinable communicable disease is threatening public health, one of the first places evaluated is “congregate settings.” According to the CDC, “congregate settings are public places where close contact with others may occur. Congregate settings include settings such as shopping centers, movie theaters, stadiums, workplaces, and schools and other classroom settings.” Churches are not in that list, but they definitely fit the criteria of “congregate settings” and may be required to practice social distancing.

The CDC further explains:

*Social distancing means remaining out of congregate settings and maintaining distance (approximately 6 feet or 2 meters) from others. If social distancing is recommended, presence in congregate settings should only occur with approval of local or state health authorities.*

There are two reasons your church must be prepared for potential closure of your church services.

1. Your church leadership **may choose** to close its services for the sake of public health.
2. Your church **may be required** to close your services for the sake of public health.

How would you minister to your church members and community should your church services close?

## **HOW YOUR CHURCH CAN PREPARE FOR POSSIBLE CLOSURE OF SERVICES**

If your church service is temporarily closed, you will need to have plans in place for communication, worship, pastoral care, leadership, and community outreach.

### **General Practices if Closed**

- Temporarily cancel extracurricular group activities and large events.
- Discourage congregants and staff from gathering or socializing anywhere.

- Discourage gatherings at places like a friend's house, a favorite restaurant, or the local coffee shop.

## **COMMUNICATION:**

### **Create a communication plan and make sure your communication systems are ready.**

The way you communicate to your congregation is really important. The tone of your communication is important. You want your congregation to be aware you are taking these measures out of an abundance of caution and that there is no reason to be fearful. If it is necessary to adjust your meetings or suspend them, communicate that you are doing these things out of common sense and a desire to mitigate any risk the virus may present.

Now is the time to beef up any communication channels that may be weak. Do you have your congregants' email addresses and phone numbers? A simple sign-up sheet or connection card on Sunday mornings can remedy this problem if you don't have them already.

#### **Follow these steps:**

- Gather necessary contact information now, including phone numbers (cell and home), email addresses, and physical addresses.
- Gather family census information: family members' names/ages, workplaces, and schools.
- Create communication plans for use with your church community.
- Include strategies for sharing information with staff and your church community.
- Include information about steps being taken by your church to prepare for the coronavirus and how additional information will be shared. [Click here](#) to see a Facebook announcement made by Kalos Church in Bellevue, Washington.

- Send out a weekly email newsletter with updates about church life, prayer requests, and health updates. [Constant Contact](#) is a great tool for sending mass emails to your people.

## TAKE MORE OF YOUR MINISTRY AND COMMUNICATION ONLINE.

If your church is unable to hold public services or even if some of your church members decide to not attend services, it will be important for your church to be able to do ministry online. This can include your website, social media, and mobile apps.

### 1. Create or Improve Your Church Website

It's a dated analogy but not having a church website in this day and age (and even more in the midst of a crisis) is like not being listed in the Yellow Pages. You must have an online presence if you expect people to find your church. Get started with these steps:

- **Audit your site to see if it's current.** Your website must be up to date with current information. Double check your phone number, emails, physical address, and any other contact info.
- **Add a "Here to Help" section.** In times of need, people will look to the church more for help and hope. Provide a hopeful and Bible-based message here with a listing of available resources for help.
- **Add a "We Meet Here" section.** If your church is no longer meeting in physical space, ensure that everyone can find you by listing links and online service times here.

If you lack the resources to start or improve your church website, we are here to help. We want you focused on building your community, not your website. [Let Outreach help you build a site you love.](#) With some guidance from you, we can start fresh OR use content from your old website to build your new one that will include free live streaming. There is no upfront cost and only \$40 per month for hosting and service.

## **2. Increase your church's Facebook presence.**

Facebook is built around a community focus. If your church is unable to meet, your church's Facebook pages may be a primary way for your church members to communicate, care for one another, and reach out to one another.

**Start a Facebook page or Facebook private group.** If you don't have a Facebook page, then [start one now](#). After having a public Facebook page for your church, consider [creating private Facebook groups](#) for specific ministries, such as youth ministry, children's ministry, and even specific Sunday school classes and small groups for people to stay in touch and informed.

**Ask members to follow and like your Facebook page.** For most churches, only a small percentage of their attenders follow the church's Facebook page. In a Sunday service during announcements and via email, ask church members to go to your Facebook page to follow and like your page. This will ensure that when posts happen on your page that your church members will have a better chance of seeing the posts in their Facebook news feeds.

**Increase your Facebook posts.** If your church is not able to meet or if attendance decreases, then increasing your posts, updates, ministry requests and videos on Facebook will be crucial. Every post provides an opportunity for your church members to share those posts with their friends and expand your ministry reach during a time when people will be open to the Gospel.

Most churches do not have the design resources or social media person to focus on this so [Outreach Social](#) has over 1,900 posts ready to go including many for coronavirus concerns. [Outreach Social](#) also features daily automated posting to Facebook and Twitter with custom church logo branding on every post. To help more churches expand their social media communication in response to the coronavirus concerns, new sign-ups get **50% off** their first year. Use code: **SeIEHxce**



### 3. Share your worship services online.

Your church may already live stream your messages. If so, you are ahead of the game. If not, you can get started live streaming or use the easier tool of Facebook Live.

- **Start live streaming.** Live streaming multiplies the reach of your church. While there may be certain aspects of community worship that are difficult online, you can serve through technologies like live streaming.

There are fundamental steps you must take first.

- **Boost your internet connection.** Live streaming requires 5 Mbps per second at the very minimum, and really, 10 Mbps should be your base rate.
- **Get your gear:**
  - camera(s)
  - external microphone
  - HD Box/Computer/Broadcaster/Video Encoder,

Enlist someone who has the technical know-how to manage production and streaming.

For more information, read this: [Live Streaming 101: How to Get in the Game](#)

For gear, check out these recommended suppliers:

- [Full Compass](#)
- [Vimeo Livestream](#)
- [Matrox](#)
- **Use Facebook Live video.** Some larger churches have video streaming of their services on their church websites, but most small churches don't have the equipment, knowledge, or finances for live streaming. [Facebook Live](#) allows a church to stream a message from staff members or a church service directly onto Facebook.

Outreach is offering a new free solution that provides your church a Live Stream page that links from your website and automatically features your Facebook Live or YouTube

Live streams. This allows online viewers to easily connect from your site to your live online services. This tool is expected to go live in early April, watch for updates at [Outreach Social](#).

**If your church cannot meet for a time, here are a few ideas to continue discipleship and Christian education online.**

- Convert face-to-face lessons into online lessons and train teachers to do so.
- Determine how to triage technical issues if faced with limited IT support and staff.
- Determine how to deal with the potential lack of access your congregants may have to computers and the internet at home.
- Remember the children. Use online resources to continue their Christian education. Check out resources from [Life.Church Open Network](#).

## **INCREASE YOUR MARKETING AND OUTREACH.**

During times of fear and uncertainty, people will be looking for hope and will be more open to the Gospel. As they are searching both locally and online, will they find your church? This is not a time to decrease your communication but a time to increase it. Here are some practical things your church can do to let your community know there is hope.

- **Increase your [social media presence](#).**
- **Invite people to your church.** Make invite cards for your members to hand out that invite people in your community to join your church services online or on Facebook. People will be more open to receiving an invite card right now. Outreach has many [ready-made designs that you can customize](#) in a few minutes or upload your own artwork.
- **Share hope with outdoor banners.** Consider putting up a banner outside of your church on the street that says “We Are Here for You!” to let your community know

you are a church that cares. Add your website and phone number to the banner. Or put up a banner that says “Join us online for church at \_\_\_\_\_” to let your community know that you have an online ministry that they can go to. Outreach has many [ready made designs that you can customize](#) in a few minutes or upload your own artwork.

## PROVIDE ONGOING PASTORAL CARE AND LEADERSHIP TO YOUR CHURCH MEMBERS.

A pastor’s job is to shepherd the flock--even if the flock is somewhat scattered. If your church is unable to meet regularly, there are still practical ways you can provide counseling, encouragement, and pastoral care during this time.

- [Address people’s fears](#) with the hope of Christ.
- Use phone calls, texting, and emails to check in with your congregants regularly.
- **Communicate through podcasts.** Podcasts are a great way to provide comfort and communicate biblical perspective during times of crisis. You can use [Facebook Live](#) as a simple tool for podcasting. For more detailed podcast guidance, read [“Your Complete Guide to Podcasting.”](#)
- **Continue pastoral counseling and care.** Pastoral counseling can be conducted through phone calls, [Skype](#), [Zoom](#), or [Google Hangouts](#).
- **Pastors have an obligation and duty to their flock in sickness and death.** In a health crisis, the demands on pastoral staff may greatly increase for funerals and comforting the bereaved. Consider live streaming funerals as people may not be able to attend due to isolation or quarantine.
- **Plan for outreach to shut-ins, people with special needs, and the elderly.**

## **CONTINUE COMMUNITY OUTREACH.**

People will be more open to the Gospel in words and in deeds than maybe ever before. Determine to speak the truth of the Gospel at this time and to serve in Jesus' name.

Whatever you decide to do to serve your community, ensure that you tell people what you're doing. You can use invite cards, your website, your Facebook page, Facebook groups, other social media accounts to inform people of your services.

Here are a few ideas to get you started.

### **Provide food and household supplies.**

- Stock up on food for those who may be quarantined and coordinate delivery teams. See what local food donation organizations you may be available to partner with. They may be looking for help in food distribution and you can serve there.
- Encourage local grocery markets and pharmacies to deliver. You could even help facilitate these deliveries.
- Help elderly people set up online ordering systems so they can order from home.
- If there is community spread of COVID-19, design strategies to avoid distribution in group settings. Consider options such as drive-through bagged lunches or meal delivery.

### **Provide varied types of assistance.**

- Care for families who may have someone sick or in the hospital.
- Provide burial care if necessary. Again, consider live streaming these services for people who cannot attend.
- Set up a "hotline" for people to call with any needs you haven't yet identified. Then connect your church members to meet these needs.
- Consider how to help with pets. There may be medical needs with pets that quarantined people cannot accommodate.
- Provide financial assistance for people who may need to miss work because of illness, to care for someone, or to care for children should schools be closed.

## OFFER YOUR BUILDING FOR MINISTRY.

While a virus outbreak may require members of the congregation to quarantine themselves in their homes for a period of time, the congregation and its facilities may also be of great benefit to the wider community. Hospitals, clinics, public health agencies, and disaster-response organizations may be able to use your facility to serve the community.

- Identify people in need and designate people within your congregation to check on these people regularly.
- Your church may be able to serve as an immunization site or a spillover facility for a hospital or a disaster service center. Prepare a description of your facilities (i.e., a list of rooms, offices, kitchens, bathrooms, and other details of your building). Reach out to emergency-management officials in your community and offer to let your facility be used during a crisis.

## POSSIBLE DISRUPTION #2: Diminished Attendance in Services

Even if you aren't forced to shut down public meetings, people may not attend because they don't feel safe. This may especially be true for the elderly who are more susceptible to the coronavirus. Small groups and other ministry gatherings may also see decreased attendance. In their absence, what will your church do to provide pastoral care, worship, and teaching for these people? How will you equip your church members to care for one another and to be the Light of Christ in your community?

Another factor to consider is that your congregation and community may experience isolation, quarantine, illness, and even death. What is your plan in each of these cases to provide pastoral care?

# HOW YOUR CHURCH CAN PREPARE TO KEEP YOUR PEOPLE SAFE AT CHURCH

Certain traditions we've adopted in our churches could be adjusted to help prevent the spread of sickness. Consider these options for church traditions.

- **Collections**—No longer pass the offering bag or plate. Instead, have boxes at the back of your church building and emphasize online giving.

## KEEPING YOUR CONGREGATION HEALTHY

It is imperative to communicate these specific recommendations to your people.

1. Please don't come if you have a fever or cough.
2. If you have these symptoms, contact your health provider:
  - Fever
  - Cough
  - Shortness of breath

Since there is currently no vaccine to prevent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), the best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. Follow these CDC guidelines:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Follow CDC's recommendations for using a facemask.
- CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a face mask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19.
- Face masks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (long enough to sing "Happy Birthday" twice), especially after going to 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. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/prevention-treatment.html>

- **Communion**—Avoid hand contact and receive communion in the hand instead of the mouth. Do not have a shared cup. Servers can wear gloves/masks and refrain from serving if sick or around anyone who is sick. Consider individual servings of communion for the time being if you are a church that practices intinction (dipping the communion bread in the wine).
- **Singing**—Some churches have suspended singing since the virus is spread through respiratory droplets.
- **Greetings**—Rather than shake hands or hug, have people...
  - wave
  - pretend to high five
  - tap feet in greeting
  - elbow bump

## WHAT WILL YOUR CHURCH DO TO CREATE A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT?

Use these CDC recommendations to assist with personal hygiene in your church building:

- Place posters that encourage [staying home when sick](#), [cough and sneeze etiquette](#), and [hand hygiene](#) around your building where they are likely to be seen. CDC has workplace resources such as posters with messages for staff about [staying home when sick](#) and how to [avoid spreading germs at work](#).
- Provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles for use by everyone.
- Instruct people to clean their hands often with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60–95% alcohol, or wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Soap and water should be used preferentially if hands are visibly dirty.
- Provide soap and water and alcohol-based hand rubs at entryways. Ensure that adequate supplies are maintained. Place hand rubs in multiple locations or in conference rooms to encourage hand hygiene.

## PERFORM ROUTINE ENVIRONMENTAL CLEANING.

- Clean all frequently touched surfaces, such as countertops, doorknobs, light switches, and faucets. Use the [cleaning agents](#) that are usually used in these areas and follow the directions on the label.
- No additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is recommended at this time.
- Provide antibacterial disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces can be wiped down before each use.

## POSSIBLE DISRUPTION #3: Decreased Giving

On a given Sunday, a high percentage of giving happens through the offering plate. Although church use of [online giving and giving apps continues to grow](#), if attendance should drop, giving will most likely drop.

To make giving easier, consistent and without the need for passing a plate, your church may want to consider online giving platforms. Churchgoers have the freedom to decide how much they want to donate and how frequently, and even have the choice to automate their giving by setting up recurring gifts. From debit cards to credit cards to automatic bank withdrawals, church online giving platforms make tithes and offerings easy for everyone.

(You may also find that the core of your church may be motivated to give extra during this time of crisis so that your church will be more prepared to serve the needs inside your church and in the community. This may be one of the largest opportunities your church has had to share the Gospel in words and deeds.)



## HOW TO PREPARE FOR YOUR CHURCH'S FINANCIAL NEEDS

There are several things you can do now to prepare for any impact COVID-19 will have on your church. Here are a few ideas.

- Build a financial reserve in case giving decreases for a period of time.
- Do a special offering to build a reserve and to provide resources for serving the needs of those in your church and community.
- Make it easier for people to give through an online giving platform if you don't have one.

There are some great giving platforms to choose from that can be tweaked to fit your church's specific needs. We've rounded up our [five favorite church online giving platforms](#) (in no particular order) to help you provide your congregation with the option to give online or through their smartphones.

- [SecureGive](#) has a 15-year track record of helping churches grow their giving to further their missions. With cutting edge technology, expert implementation, and biblical stewardship strategy, you're resourced to grow giving in a sustainable way.
- [TouchPoint](#) is a powerful cloud-based church management system that equips leaders to grow fully devoted followers of Christ. TouchPoint is designed for mid-to-large churches looking for a ChMS solution that is off-the-shelf and customizable.
- [mobileAxept](#) serves some of the largest and fastest growing churches in the United States. In addition to their GiveNow product they have added ReachNow and ConnectNow to their suite of services.
- [PushPay](#) provides a complete, robust dashboard that harnesses your giving data to show you where every member of your church is on their giving journey with your church. Not only can you view the complete picture of your donors, you can see individual donors and get customized next-steps to help you invite those people into deeper participation with your church.

- [easyTithe](#) makes giving easy. With their iOS or Android App, donors can manage their online giving directly from their phones. Members can update payment methods, select specific funds, and manage the frequency with which they choose to give.

## **POSSIBLE DISRUPTION #4: Church Staff Absenteeism**

The best recommendation to manage community health is to stay home if you are experiencing symptoms. In addition, anyone in close contact (i.e., family members) with someone experiencing symptoms is encouraged to stay home in quarantine.

It is naive to believe that your staff will not be affected should the virus come to your community. What plans do you have in place for continuity of pastoral care and services with staff absenteeism?

### **HOW TO MANAGE POTENTIAL STAFF ABSENTEEISM**

In the event of leadership being absent, you will need contingency plans for each position.

- Identify the critical job duties.
- Cross train for those duties now.
- Identify two people who can assume those duties in a staff person's absence to add two layers of contingency.

#### **These personnel management guidelines are recommended by the CDC:**

- Actively encourage sick employees to stay home.
- Ensure that your sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and that employees are aware of these policies.

- Do not require a healthcare provider's note for employees who are sick with acute respiratory illness to validate their illness or to return to work, as healthcare provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely way.
- Employers should maintain flexible policies that permit employees to stay home to care for a sick family member. Employers should be aware that more employees may need to stay at home to care for sick children or other sick family members than is usual.
- Separate sick employees. Employees who are well but who have a sick family member at home with COVID-19 should notify their supervisor and refer to CDC guidance for how to conduct a risk assessment of their potential exposure.
- If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Employees exposed to a co-worker with confirmed COVID-19 should refer to CDC guidance for how to conduct a risk assessment of their potential exposure.

# For More Information

## CENTERS OF DISEASE CONTROL

[Faith-Based & Community Organizations Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Checklist](#)

[Preparing for the Flu: A Communication Toolkit for Community and Faith-Based Organizations](#)

[Symptoms of Coronavirus](#)

[Guidance for Risk Assessment](#)

[Guidance for Business Response](#)

## ADDITIONAL ARTICLES

[This Is How Asian Churches Are Preventing the Spread of Covid-19](#)

[Pastor in Singapore Tests Positive for Covid-19](#)

[Wuhan Pastor: The Coronavirus Fight Is Also a Spiritual Battle](#)

[The Coronavirus, Youth Ministry and Evangelism](#)

[When the Coronavirus Comes to Church: Are You Prepared?](#)

[A Christ-Centered Response to the Coronavirus Threat](#)

[How a Hong Kong Church Is Responding to the Coronavirus Outbreak](#)

[Congregational Planning for Pandemics](#)

[A Virus Doesn't Determine My Peace — Finding Confidence in Uncertainty](#)

[You Need to Talk to Your Kids About Coronavirus. Here's How.](#)

[7 Ways to Help Children Deal With Fear](#)

## THE FOLLOWING IS A SAMPLE [FACEBOOK ANNOUNCEMENT](#) MADE BY KALOS CHURCH IN BELLEVUE, WASHINGTON.

*Hello Kalos Church Family!*

*In light of the recent concerns in our community about the COVID-19 virus, we want you to know that our Lead Team Staff at Kalos Church are taking every precaution to keep our church family healthy.*

*Kalos Church **WILL GATHER TOMORROW** for both the 9:45AM and 11:30AM services. Online viewing is the perfect way to be part of our church whenever you feel unwell.*

*Visit the Kalos Church facebook page to watch our livestream.*

*We are committed to keeping Kalos Church a clean space for you to worship. We are in this together. Here are ways you can help:*

- Wash your hands often with soap and water.*
- If you are feeling unwell, please rest at home.*
- When coughing or sneezing, consider others and keep covered.*
- Disinfect belongings you bring to church from your home, like diaper bags, blankets, etc.*

*At Kalos Kids we regularly ask moms and dads to keep their children at home if they have any of these symptoms:*

- Runny nose*
- Headache*
- Cough*
- Sore throat*
- Fever*
- General feeling of being unwell*

*Let's keep our trust in the Lord our Healer! Health rules like these were a part of Moses' law. God cares about cleanliness! We have wonderful promises in God's word of his protection over our well being.*

*Remember the promise from **Psalm 91:5-7**:*

*You will not fear the terror of night,  
nor the arrow that flies by day,  
nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness,  
nor the plague that destroys at midday.  
A thousand may fall at your side,  
ten thousand at your right hand,  
but it will not come near you.*

*Most of all, keep showing love in practical ways to those who need it most.*

*See you tomorrow!*

*Pastors Pradeepan and Amreitha Jeeva*