

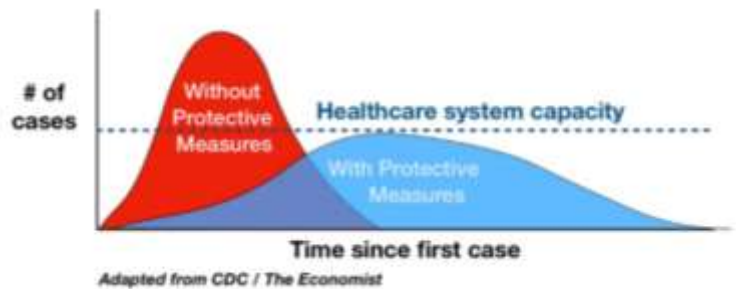
# Coronavirus and the Call to Love

## COVID 19 and Those Most at Risk

For the vast majority of patients, COVID 19 may not pose a serious health risk. However, the CDC reports: “Older people and people of all ages with severe underlying health conditions — like heart disease, lung disease and diabetes, for example — seem to be at higher risk of developing serious COVID-19 illness.”<sup>1</sup>

## COVID 19 and our Nation’s Health System

“Flattening the curve” is the goal of all the measures to slow the spread of the coronavirus. Health officials hope to spread out new infections so that our health care system is not overwhelmed. For example, in northern Italy, hospitals have run out of ICU beds and ventilators to treat COVID 19 patients.<sup>2</sup>



## Out of Love for Others

While there may not be an immediate threat to you, out of love for those who are at higher risk and out of love for our community, we at St. Paul’s want to do all that we can to slow the spread of the virus when it arrives in our community. Now is the time to act since we do not know when it will arrive.

## St. Paul’s Staff Response

Disinfectants used by our cleaning crews are rated to kill the coronavirus on surfaces. We will be also be encouraging all staff and volunteers to frequently wash their hands and stay home if sick. We will continue to monitor communication from the Centers for Disease Control and our local governments to determine any next steps.

## Your Part in our Response

1. If you have any type of symptoms of coughing, sneezing, fever, nausea, achiness, or any flu-like symptom, stay home.
2. Practice good hygiene. Wash your hands often.
3. Say “hello.” When asked if churches should be limiting activities like shaking hands, Surgeon General Jerome Adams responded, “It is prudent to limit touching, especially hand-to-hand.”<sup>3</sup> While shaking hands and hugs are part of our culture, feel free to simply say, “hello” rather than make physical contact. For the time being, our greeters will not be shaking hands with all who enter.
4. Communion practices:
  - a. Communion distributors will be reminded to wash their hands immediately before distribution.

<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html>

<sup>2</sup> NBC News: <https://www.nbcnews.com/science/science-news/what-flatten-curve-chart-shows-how-critical-it-everyone-fight-n1155636>

<sup>3</sup> From *Christianity Today*: <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2020/march/your-church-and-coronavirus-advice-for-churches-from-surgeon.html>

- b. The distributor will place the bread in your hand rather than place it on your tongue. We will use only individual communion cups.
  - c. We will suspend kneeling at the altar rail during this time. Instructions will be given at our next communion services the weekend of March 29.
5. We will cancel our last three Lenten soup suppers.
  6. We ask everyone to complete a connection card so that we have an accurate record of everyone attending our services if it becomes necessary to track anyone exposed to the coronavirus.

## **Your Worship Patterns**

You may determine that is best for you to alter your worship pattern. Perhaps you will want to worship at a service with a smaller attendance. Typically, our Saturday 5 pm, Sunday 7:45 and 10:45 am, and Wednesday 7 pm services have a smaller attendance. A smaller attendance may allow you to leave more space between you and other worshippers.

As the disease progresses, more individuals, especially those in the “at risk” population, may need to worship online. You can watch The Bridge service live on Sundays at 10:15 am:

- [TheBridgeMuskego.org/live-stream/](https://TheBridgeMuskego.org/live-stream/)
- Facebook: The Bridge at St. Paul’s Muskego

This week we will also begin recording the entire traditional service. Find it at [StPaulMuskego.org/past-messages/sermons/](https://StPaulMuskego.org/past-messages/sermons/). Recordings of entire Bridge services are available on our YouTube Channel: The Bridge Church Muskego.

## **Help Those Who Don’t Have Access**

If you have a friend or family member who does not have internet access, you can bring the worship to them on your smartphone or tablet. If you or a friend or family member is unable to worship because of coronavirus infection, please contact the church office (414-422-0320 or use the contact form at [StPaulMuskego.org](https://StPaulMuskego.org)) and let us know so that we can continue to serve them with the Lord’s Supper.

## **Gathering Offerings**

Rather than pass the offering plate (or bucket in The Bridge) during the service, we will ask our ushers to stand at the doors with the offering plate/bucket to receive your offering. Consider using our online giving options for one-time or recurring gifts from your checking or savings account (most cost effective for St. Paul’s) or credit card. You can also text a dollar amount (example \$25) to 414-316-6733.

## **An Overabundance of Caution?**

While this may seem too much to some, we as a congregation want to be sensitive to the needs of those most at risk in our own St. Paul’s family and the reputation of God’s church. “If we are reckless and allow our churches to become centers of disease, then we damage the reputation of the Gospel in our communities.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> “Religious bodies have heaped shame on themselves in Asia. In Singapore and Korea, huge shares of the infected became infected via religious gatherings. In many cases, these were Christian gatherings.” (“Prepare Your Church for COVID 19,” a paper produced by a Lutheran missionary in Hong Kong.)