

Trinity Responds to the Coronavirus

Trinity Episcopal Church, Everett WA

The Rev. Rachel Taber-Hamilton

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Some Background on the Coronavirus

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) reports that the outbreak of a new respiratory disease caused by a coronavirus was first detected in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. The virus has now been detected in 57 locations internationally, including cases in the United States. The virus itself has been named "SARS-CoV-2" and the disease it causes has been named "coronavirus disease 2019" (abbreviated "COVID-19").

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are common in many different species of animals, including camels, cattle, cats, and bats. Rarely, animal coronaviruses can infect people and then spread between people such as with MERS-CoV, SARS-CoV, and now with this new virus (SARS-CoV-2). All three of these viruses have their origins in bats.

Early on, many of the patients in the COVID-19 outbreak in Wuhan, China had some link to a large seafood and live animal market, suggesting animal-to-person spread. Later, a growing number of patients reportedly did not have exposure to animal markets, indicating person-to-person spread. Person-to-person spread has been reported outside China, including in the United States. The west coast states of California, Oregon, and Washington are all reporting cases of the Coronavirus.

Washington State

The first case of the coronavirus in Washington State appeared in Everett. That individual has since been declared cleared of the virus and discharged from the hospital. However, Washington State announced late Friday evening (2/28/20) that a high school student in Snohomish County tested positive and was in home isolation in a suspected community transmission case.

Additionally, State health officials reported that a woman in her 50s in King County tested positive after traveling to Daegu, South Korea, the site of a major coronavirus outbreak. She, too, was in home isolation, while two additional adults who have been diagnosed are associated with an assisted living facility. Today (Saturday), The Washington State Department of Health and Seattle and King County health officials have reported the first death from the virus in our state, a man with underlying health conditions.

Today, Gov. Jay Inslee declared a state of emergency in response to new cases of COVID-19. He issued a proclamation that directs state agencies and departments to utilize state resources and do everything reasonably possible to assist affected communities responding to and recovering from COVID-19 cases. Such a proclamation is normative and necessary in order to activate statewide resources and access necessary funds in order to support our communities, effectively respond to needs, and expand preventative measures.

The Department of Health announced last week that the Public Health Lab in Shoreline now has the capability to test for cases of COVID-19, expediting results.

Symptoms & Severity of the Virus

Reported symptoms have ranged from mild to severe illness and death for confirmed coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) cases. Based on what has been seen previously as the incubation period of MERS -CoV viruses, symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure and include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

The elderly, young children, and those individuals with compromised immune systems can be especially vulnerable.

The symptoms of COVID-19 differ from common cold and flu viruses. Cold and flu symptoms usually include nasal and sinus congestion symptoms, whereas the most common symptoms of COVID-19 are a high fever and a cough. COVID-19 specifically wants to live in the lungs of the person who has contracted it, where the virus's anatomy bonds specifically with the anatomy of lung cells. As the virus replicates within the lungs and healthy lung cells are damaged, the patient experiences shortness of breath. The situation can lead to the development of pneumonia, which by itself can be fatal.

People of normative health, with no underlying health issues already present, have the ability to recover from the COVID-19 virus as the body's natural immune system figures out how to generate the antibodies specific to counter attacking the virus cells. After 2-4 weeks most patients are able to go home, virus free. However, about a 1 in 4 patients need more time to recover if complications like pneumonia have arisen. People with underlying chronic illnesses or autoimmune insufficiencies are in a higher risk category, since their immune systems may not be able to respond as effectively to fighting off the virus.

If you believe that you may be experiencing symptoms, it will be very important for you to be tested for COVID-19. However, **BEFORE YOU GO** to your physician's office or to the emergency room of your local hospital, the CDC advises that you call ahead in order to speak with a medical care provider - they will want to put necessary protocols in place to receive you, including providing appropriate barrier protection in their facility and for their healthcare workers. Alternatively, you may be directed to go to facility that is set up specifically for quarantine protocols and therefore has the best ability to care for your condition.

That said, depending on your symptoms, you may be advised to self-quarantine in your own home and monitor your condition. This is particularly possible, if there is someone in the home or close by who can assist you. If you are quarantined at home, be sure to alert your physician, family members, and others with regular updates on your symptoms and needs.

If you are diagnosed with COVID-19, you should restrict activities outside your home, except for getting medical care. Do not go to work, school, or public areas. Avoid using public transportation, ride-sharing, or taxis. Separate yourself from other people and animals in your home.

People: As much as possible, you should stay in a specific room and away from other people in your home. Also, you should use a separate bathroom, if available.

Animals: You should restrict contact with pets and other animals while you are sick with COVID-19, just like you would around other people. Although there have not been reports of pets or other animals becoming sick with COVID-19, it is still recommended that people sick with COVID-19 limit contact with animals until more information is known about the virus. When possible, have another member of your household care for your animals while you are sick. If you are sick with COVID-19, avoid contact with your pet, including petting, snuggling, being kissed or licked, and sharing food. If you must care for your pet or be around animals while you are sick, wash your hands before and after you interact with pets and wear a facemask in order to prevent exposing pets and people to the virus.

If you are subject to home quarantine and need assistance with shopping, meals, or errands and have no one to assist you, please contact the Trinity Church office at 425-252-4129. We will arrange for either a trained volunteer, parish nurse, or clergy person to follow up with you.

Community Preparedness & Prevention

The risk of getting COVID-19 is currently low in the U.S. due in part to quick action from health authorities as well as state and local governance. However, some people are worried about the disease. Fear and anxiety can lead to an unhelpful and unnecessary state of panic and social stigma, particularly towards Chinese or other Asian Americans. Panic and stigmatization are the least helpful responses to any community care plan.

An informed community has the best chance of remaining healthy, facilitating recovery, and of promoting an organized and effective response to COVID-19.

The CDC recommends that individuals and families follow everyday preventive measures:

- *Voluntary Home Isolation*: Stay home when you are sick with respiratory disease symptoms. At the present time, these symptoms are more likely due to influenza or other respiratory viruses than to COVID-19-related virus.
- *Respiratory Etiquette*: Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue, then throw it in the trash can.
- *Hand Hygiene*: Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (hum "Happy Birthday" twice through); 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 60%-95% alcohol.
- *Environmental Health Action*: Routinely clean frequently touched surfaces and objects
- *Refrain from touching your face* - wearing a facemask may help keep you mindful of not putting your hands or fingers on your face, but frequent hand washing is the *most effective measure* in preventing and spreading the virus.

Healthy Practices at Church

The latest recommendations from the CDC and the Office of the Bishop of the Diocese of Olympia include the following:

1. While the common cup, properly administered, has been scientifically proven to be safer than intinction, health officials are now asking us to **cease the use of the common cup**. The cup can be used by the priest in the presidency of the Eucharist but offering it to the altar party or the congregation should cease for the time being. At Trinity, at the time of the offertory, bread and wine will still be processed to the altar. However, there will only be a small amount of wine for use by the clergy person, and the bread will be wafers, including the gluten free option. Communion will be offered in one kind, the bread.
2. The new request from health officials regards the water in the baptismal font. Namely, **water in the baptismal font will be drained** so that the practice of dipping the hands in the water of a font is suspended for the time being. Scientists who have reviewed this issue feel that the virus could be spread in this manner, though not proven. In the season of Lent we will truly have a desert experience.
3. The Peace: **All physical contact should be discontinued during the Peace**. Practice bowing, making a prayerful sign to the other person, looking at them lovingly and offering the Peace, but then moving on without touching.
4. The practice of **sending Eucharistic Visitors to homes is suspended for now**. Eucharistic Visitors visiting homes is an opportunistic issue with this virus, and puts those in

the home, and those visiting, at risk. Bishop Rickel requests that home visits be restricted to clergy for now and that Eucharistic Visitors not be deployed until further notice.

5. We are additionally being asked to **cease passing the offering plate**. Rather, in order to minimize many hands touching the same object, we will set out the offering plates in strategic locations within the sanctuary spot and ask people to come to the plate to put in their offerings prior to the beginning of the service.

Communication

If at any time you are diagnosed with CORVID-19, Pastor Rachel would be very grateful to be made aware of your condition, and she will keep that information confidential if you prefer. In this way, she can best monitor the needs and condition of the members of our congregation and direct a coordinated and informed response. As a Board Certified Healthcare Chaplain, Pastor Rachel is professionally familiar with isolation and barrier protection protocols. She is committed to keeping our members connected to the Trinity community, providing pastoral support during times of illness or concern, and maintaining accessibility to the sacraments of the church when they are most needed.

If you have any questions about the information shared in this notification or you wish to receive communion in the home, please contact Pastor Rachel at **425-252-4129**. If you get the Trinity answering system, please be sure to leave a message with your name, phone number, and the best time to return your call. Someone will get back to you as soon as possible.

Trinity Episcopal Church in Everett has a long history of helping our local community and Snohomish County in times of need. Our church served as the community center for information, food drives, and gathering other critical resources during WWI and WWII. We have always supported and served the larger community in times of need, and we will continue to do so now. Please keep an eye out for emails and updates from the church in order to best respond to any requests and needs as they may arise, as you are able. In the meantime, stay in touch, stay connected, and stay informed.

