

18 March 2020

Dear All,

Regarding the COVID-19 outbreak, this has been a rough week. Our country has moved from the calm approach of previous viral threats to an all-out public-health “war,” as President Trump stated today in his briefing with the Coronavirus Task Force. To see it, skip ahead to about 18½ minutes in when they enter the room (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=38lwGCO8jcE>).

### **Why is this new coronavirus so dangerous?**

1. It is more infectious than influenza.
2. It is about ten times more likely to kill than regular influenza.
3. It kills differently than influenza. Influenza can lead to (treatable) secondary bacterial pneumonia, while COVID-19 leads to acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS.)
4. There is at present no vaccine. We have influenza vaccines. The first possible vaccine for this coronavirus is being developed at record pace, but it is a long way from possible production.
5. There is no treatment. Influenza responds to some of the antiviral agents.
6. Because it is new, there is no natural immunity. Years of influenza outbreaks have led to some general immunity in the community, even helping with newer strains of influenza.

**Why must we get involved?** Estimates I’ve seen say that 40-70% of the U.S. population will contract the virus this year. It is now in 176 countries. The wise, informed participation of all is vital to help to slow the spread of this novel (new) virus. The slower it progresses, the better our medical resources will be able to respond effectively. (There are limited numbers of hospital beds and ventilators.) Here’s how we can all help: [https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/03.16.20\\_coronavirus-guidance\\_8.5x11\\_315PM.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/03.16.20_coronavirus-guidance_8.5x11_315PM.pdf)

**How is First Baptist Church responding?** I would encourage you to view Pastor Wilkerson’s videos ([see the church website](#)) that have been prepared in recent days. A week ago, churches were meeting as usual. Last weekend, assemblies were limited to a maximum size of 250, and on Monday this was further reduced to 50 and finally to 10. The situation is very dynamic and unprecedented.

**Any word for missionaries?** As pastors and spiritual leaders, missionaries must keep up-to-date with regard to these unforeseen and impactful developments. Everyone is watching. For the sake of those whom we serve and for the sake of our testimony in the community as responsible citizens, we can’t afford to ignore, overlook, or appear to disregard the direction of our public-health authorities.

**How can we become well-informed?** We must be disciplined, organized, and diligent in order to grasp and track all the complex elements and to respond appropriately. It’s tough to get a handle on everything. There is a lot of noise. We all need to know where to go locally for real answers for those whom we serve.

We’ve already published the following three updates, which are [on the FBMI website](#):

1. From February, a general overview for the missionary as a spiritual leader
2. From March, a more focused update for all individuals in the church

3. From March, an approach to U.S. Department of State Travel Advisories

I'm adding today this letter with the following resources:

1. From the Cleveland Clinic, clarification of the terms *quarantine*, *isolation*, and *social distancing*: <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/covid-19-understanding-quarantine-isolation-and-social-distancing-in-a-pandemic/>
2. From Bro. Bosje, an excellent reference for statistics: <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/>
3. From Johns Hopkins, another such reference: <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>
4. Any videos of the Presidential Coronavirus Task Force's briefings to learn from the authorities themselves rather than from second-hand impressions.

### **Any guidance from the Bible?**

1. We need knowledge, wisdom, and understanding. All are based upon a fear of God (Proverbs 1:7; 9:10). He is the Judge of the whole earth. Let's be right with Him and walk with Him daily.
2. We don't yield to fear (II Timothy 1:7).
3. We stay focused on the Great Commission. Like Paul, in the midst of the storm, let's lift up the Lord and point people to Him (Acts 27:21-26; 33-36).
4. We trust our sovereign God. He is perfect in knowledge, power, and love. We can trust Him and His decisions (Psalm 102).
5. Pray for all involved (James 5:16).

**Please, take this seriously!** In the White House briefing, it was mentioned that our experts are watching what happens in Italy and France to get an informed idea how the virus might affect our nation. Look at the figures from Italy on the [worldometers.info/coronavirus](https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus) site mentioned above. Today, the 18<sup>th</sup> of March, it was reported that Italy had 4,207 new cases and 475 new deaths. This is in one day alone, and the exponential curve is still climbing.

With our love and prayers,

Bro. Siemer on Behalf of Bro. Bosje and the FBMI Home Office Team