

March 12, 2020

Dear Pastors and Leaders,

I'm sure that some of you are thinking through what to do in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. Here are some of my thoughts:

- Don't panic. This is serious, but most people who get the virus will be fine. We have put our lives into Jesus' hands and must remember his care for us. Let our peace be a testimony to the world around us.
- Pray. Pray for those who have the virus. Pray that God will intervene and prevent the spread of this virus. Pray for protection over the vulnerable.
- Take a break from hugs and handshakes. We're a loving people but temporarily limiting contact in our gatherings will help us to do our part to prevent the virus from spreading. Maybe the now thing is a holy fist-bump or our own version of the Asian greeting with palms pressed together saying "blessings" instead of "Namaste."
- Practice good hand hygiene. Wash for 20 seconds. Don't touch your face with unwashed hands (a hard habit to break). Sneeze/cough into a kleenex or your elbow... not your hand. Use hand sanitizer and consider making it available in your church service. Think through how you serve coffee and snacks if that is part of your service.
- Self-isolate if you're sick. Stay away from church if you are sick or have reason to believe that you have been in contact with COVID-19. Even if what you have is a cold or flu, passing it to others compromises their immune system.
- Consider recommending that those who are at higher risk from the virus (elderly, heart disease, diabetes, lung disease) stay home from church for the time being if the virus is anywhere close to where you are.
- Talk to your team about what to do if public gatherings are suspended. Some places have now banned indoor events over 250 people. Many of our churches already livestream their services on Facebook and YouTube. This can be done as simply as using a smartphone or can be done with a more elaborate setup. Be aware of copyright issues for broadcasting worship songs. If vulnerable persons stay home they can still join your service online.
- Make sure that you are setup for online giving. If you haven't done so yet, talk to the National Office about setting up your church as a payee in online banking.
- Be alert to ministry opportunities. There will be multiple needs if and when the virus strikes a community: health, support, financial and so on. The church has always been known for caring for people others are afraid to be near... think lepers. Also, a situation



like this may can cause a person to consider their own mortality and be more open to eternal truths.

- If you have office staff, make a plan for working from home. Most computer systems can be set up for remote access. Phone calls can be forwarded. Videoconferencing is the next best thing to being there in person. If the virus is spreading in your community then implement your plan for working remotely.
- At this point we have no reason to believe that the National Convention will be cancelled. Quebec has banned indoor events over 250 people, which is more than what we are expecting. But if you are sick or have reason to believe you have been in contact with COVID-19, then please cancel your plans for convention. Those who are more vulnerable may want to think twice about coming. Airlines are allowing cancellations for tickets to travel in March or April and we'll do what we can to get other refunds for you.

Together in Jesus,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Falkiner", written in a cursive style.

Steve Falkiner, President