

As COVID-19 is new, we don't really know how to treat the disease. 80% of those contracting the virus will have only minor symptoms- but even so, they must follow the prescribed public health protocols. There are a number of behavior modifications we can (and must) do to reduce the spread and impact of the virus. The most common focused activities are:

- wash your hands frequently (up to every 30 minutes depending on where you are, more often as appropriate, and for 20 seconds each time)
- clean "high-touch" surfaces regularly (COVID-19 can live on smooth surfaces for up to 3 days and several hours in the air)
- don't share personal items
- cough into a tissue or a sleeve
- shake hands with your elbow
- maintain separation from others (some say 6 feet)
- if you're sick, stay home- even if you just think you're sick
- don't panic

Don't go to a hospital or doctor's office without first contacting the NM COVID-19 Hotline and getting instructions (1-855-600-3453 for healthcare questions, and 1-833-551-0518 for all other questions).

Churches must consider postponing meetings that are not essential or critical. Many meetings can be conducted by telephone or video conferencing- or just delayed. Churches should also consider providing hand sanitizers at strategic points in the church and appointing a "cleaning" team to wipe down frequently touched surfaces (bathrooms, doors, common areas) before, during, and after the facility is used.

Now, consistent with our Wesleyan tradition, every church should look out the front door and do what they can to support their community; with schools and businesses closed, we need to be more involved in feeding and childcare activities. Support food pantries, provide meals, and check on neighbors. Schools are expecting to continue to provide school meals – but that certainly doesn't take care of all the needs. Daycare facilities are expected to stay open, but again, that will not satisfy all the needs. Look to your neighbors and the neighborhood.

Also, I am encouraging each church and district to implement a response task force to monitor and manage each church's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and coordinate with district and conference response task forces. The attached CDC pamphlet, "Get Your Community- and Faith-based ORGANIZATIONS Ready for Pandemic Flu (April 2017)" provides a strong framework for working with this COVID-19 pandemic.

For further information, call Roselie Johnston at the Conference Office, 505-255-8786, or Hap Escue (Disaster Response) at 505-453-2800