March 2, 2020

Dear Faith Leader:

Metro Health is taking steps to prevent the introduction and spread of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in our community. The faith community will play an important role in this effort. You can help by sharing the information below:

Maintain perspective. The United States has seen 16,000 deaths from influenza so far this flu season, compared to 1 from COVID-19 as of this writing. San Antonio has no identified cases of community transmission to date. Among people infected with COVID-19, only 20% become seriously ill.

Take simple actions to slow the spread of respiratory infections and protect our community members who are at higher risk, such as the elderly and those with underlying health conditions. Stay home when sick, wash your hands often, avoid touching your face, cover your cough with your arm or a tissue, and disinfect surfaces.

Fight misinformation. Avoid spreading the stigma that this is a disease limited to one type of people. Know that people released from quarantine or isolation do not pose a risk of infection to other people.

Additional information and guidance for the faith community:

- Be prepared: The information in this online article, for those of us fortunate enough to have homes, is accurate and hits all the key points. Please share the information in it with your congregation and your partners.

- Consider temporarily adapting customs to minimize close personal contact, for example, by finding a substitute for handshakes. Encourage people to keep a personal distance of 3 feet from each other.

- Know the symptoms of novel coronavirus infection: fever (100.4F or more) and a dry cough; not a runny nose, typically. Over time, shortness of breath. Only people who are seriously ill are candidates for COVID-19 testing at this time.

- If a congregant is coughing, other people should keep a distance of 6 feet. In general, people who are sick are advised to stay at home and call their healthcare provider, rather than attend public activities.

- Encourage the vulnerable people you serve to seek out a specific person who will check on and help care for them if they get sick. For people who are homebound, we recommend having on hand a 2-week supply of essential items, including prescription medications. People with special needs can call 2-1-1 to enroll in the State of Texas Emergency Assistance Registry.

- Explore using telephone, teleconferencing and other technologies to minister to people who have
CITY OF SAN ANTONIO

an acute respiratory infection, or who are in quarantine or isolation. Quarantine for COVID-19 typically lasts 14 days, and can create significant emotional and financial stress.

- We are in cold and flu season. COVID-19 symptoms are similar to these more common infections—it is far more likely that anyone with respiratory symptoms is suffering from a cold or flu.

- We know there may be specific situations that arise where you have questions. We will have a hotline in a few days, 210-207-5579—please call us so we can work together to determine the best course of action.

At this time, we are not making a recommendation to cancel large gatherings or social events. This is a rapidly evolving situation. For ongoing updates and for additional COVID-19 resources, including posters and fact sheets in multiple languages, please visit: sanantonio.gov/Health/News/Alerts/CoronaVirus and dhs.texas.gov/coronavirus/.

Thank you for serving our community, and for partnering with us for a healthy San Antonio.

Sincerely,

Junda Woo, MD, MPH
Local Health Authority / Medical Director
San Antonio Metropolitan Health District
Junda.woo@sanantonio.gov