

Coronavirus and the Church: *A faithful response in our community*

By now, you have heard the term “coronavirus” online and in conversation with others. The specific strand of coronavirus (COVID-19) which you are hearing so much about was first reported in Wuhan, China on December 31, 2019. It’s rapid spread across the world has caused concern. Reports of illnesses and deaths related to the coronavirus have flooded news sites and social media. It has impacted the way we connect with each other and our community here in Centre Wellington.

In light of this, you may already be asking questions like:

- *Should we be worried about coronavirus?*
- *What sort of precautions should we take in our gatherings at Central?*
- *How can we help serve our community as COVID-19 impacts Centre Wellington?*
- *Will our response as Christians look different than others? How so?*

At times like this, it is important that we, as the Church, take the time for an informed and thoughtful response. Let’s seek wisdom and be full of compassion and faith at this time. What follows is some basic information about COVID-19 as well as some guidance for a Christian response.

What is coronavirus and COVID-19?

Coronaviruses (CoV) are a large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases. COVID-19 (the “coronavirus” which is causing concern right now) is a new strain that has not been previously identified in humans.

Common signs of infection include respiratory symptoms, fever, cough, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure and even death.

In a world of social media and worrisome news reports, it is important to get the right information from good sources. For an overview of coronavirus and COVID-19, watch this video (*click on the image to view*).



Should we be worried?

There is no denying that COVID-19 will pose a unique risk to public health. It is not wrong to show concern at this time.

With that said, we can be sure that God is not surprised by this outbreak. At the same time, he does not ignore the struggles that coronavirus has caused for many people. The book of Psalms reminds us that God “doesn’t slumber or sleep” while caring for us. He doesn’t let go of us or let us slip (Psalm 121).

*We don't need
to be overcome
with fear –
God is with us!*

Even though we might feel powerless and vulnerable right now, we don’t need to be overcome with fear – God is with us and we will not be shaken! (Isaiah 41:10; Psalm 16:8-11)

Even so, we can still share God’s interest and concern for ourselves and those around us during this time. Jesus told us to let our light shine in a dark world (Matthew 5:14-16), and our care-filled response may be just such a time to shine.

What should we do?

- **Be Prayerful** – The Church needs to pray for those affected, those caring for the affected. Paul calls on us to *“not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”* (Philippians 4:6-7)

Pray and give thanks for the medical professionals, concerned citizens, and government in our area (and across the globe) that are actively advocating for an effective and appropriate response.

- **Be Responsible** – Regular hand washing, covering your mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing, thoroughly cooking meat and eggs will reduce your risk of getting sick or spreading the virus to others.



- **Be Peaceful** – Some people are rushing to our local grocery stores to pile up on toilet paper and hand sanitizer. Others have chosen to isolate themselves from outside contact altogether. We may feel drawn into similar reactions as fear tempts us to isolate and hoard. Instead, let's be responsible and peaceful, remembering that you are cared for by God and are part of his Church which will help in your times of need.

It's not that Christians should throw sense to the wind or ignore advice. Rather, in a world gripped by fear, the church should be the non-anxious presence that witnesses to the peace of Christ that lives in us.¹

- **Be Helpful** – While others may be drawn into fear and isolation, why not consider simple ways of helping each other at this time? Some of the Church's greatest seasons of public witness have come during medical crises when Christians offered compassionate help to the neighbours in need.²

Some of the Church's greatest witness has come through compassionate help to its neighbours.

Why not take time to swap names and numbers with your neighbours and offer to be on call if they do happen to become ill and need something brought to them? Or, why not reassure a co-worker or classmate that you will help them catch up from lost work?

Our response can be different!

The reality is that COVID-19 will come... and it will go. (*"This too shall pass."*) Some people in our community will be affected by it, others may not. Regardless of its overall affect, coronavirus will cause fear and concerns which will give the Church an opportunity to witness to our neighbours through our prayers, our peace, and our help.

Let's go forward with responsibility, compassion, and faith together!

¹ Danny Webster, "Coronavirus: A Christ Centered Response"

² Rodney Stark in his book "The Rise of Christianity" tells how the response of the early church to the plagues in Rome was pivotal to the growth of the church.

Websites and Articles:

World Health Organization page dedication to coronavirus: (<https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus>)

“How Catholics should respond to the coronavirus” is an article from the editors of America Magazine: (<https://www.americamagazine.org/politics-society/2020/03/05/editors-how-catholics-should-respond-coronavirus>)

“The Witness of Christian Compassion” is an overview of the Church’s response to pandemics in history.
(<https://www.str.org/blog/the-witness-of-christian-compassion#.Xme35ahKjcc>)

“Coronavirus, Christians, and a Christ-Centered Response” is a similar look at the coronavirus outbreak in Christianity Today Magazine.
(<https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2020/february/coronavirus-christians-and-christ-centered-response.html>)

Local Resources:

Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health page dedicated to “Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)”: (<https://www.wdgpUBLICHEALTH.ca/your-health/novel-coronavirus-covid-19>)

Questions about Novel Coronavirus?

Call 1-800-265-7293 ext. 7006

**Our call centre is open
weekdays from 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.**

