



*“A time is coming when the world will go mad, and they will look at you and say,  
‘You are not like us; you must be mad.’”*

- St. Anthony of Egypt, 251-356

March Madness is upon us, my friends. And I am not referring to basketball. Our world is currently consumed with the coronavirus. It has become the central topic of conversation these days, not only in the news, but in the boardroom, the classroom, the locker room, and even in our pews. While concern is certainly appropriate, panic is not.

For those who are eager to generate more light than heat, the most accurate and up-to-date information on the coronavirus can be found on the websites of the [Center for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#) and [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#).

As far as best practices for churches are concerned, here are *seven simple suggestions*:

- 1. If you are sick, stay home. It is better to miss church than to infect others.**
- 2. If you are sick on Sunday, check out an online service. Many of our churches provide live streaming of their weekly worship services.**
- 3. Senior adults, especially those over 80, should limit their social interactions, including church-related activities.**
- 4. When you gather as a community of faith, keep a little more social distance than usual. Avoid hugs and handshakes for now.**
- 5. Use hand sanitizer, and make sure to set up several dispensers in high traffic areas at the church (entryway, sanctuary, classrooms, etc.).**
- 6. Pay extra attention to cleaning and disinfecting the most vulnerable areas of the church (bathroom, nursery, kitchen, etc.).**
- 7. Wash your hands often and cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze.**

Above all, let's make sure and avoid the unholy hysteria that so often accompanies any public crisis in our world. When we are tempted to get caught up in the chaos, let's remember Jesus' promise that "the truth will set you free" (John 8:32).

The truth is that many of us will likely contract the coronavirus in the coming days, despite our best efforts to prevent it. And the truth is that, with very rare exceptions, we will all recover fully in a relatively short amount of time.

As Christ followers, we are called to be people who are known by our love (John 13:34-35), and we live with the assurance that "there is no fear in love, for perfect love casts out all fear" (1 John 4:10). Our greatest witness to the power of the gospel at times like this will come through our fearless trust in Christ the King and our faithful compassion for those around us who are in desperate need of God's loving care. It is in the darkest times that the light of Christ shines most brightly.

*“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:14-16).*

- David O. Williams, Lead Superintendent, EFC-MAYM