

March 12, 2020

## COVID-19 and Quinault

Dear Saints at QBC,

Over the past thirty days we have seen the steady drip of news regarding the COVID-19 (Coronavirus Disease-2019) outbreak gradually increase until it became a gushing faucet, and now a skyscraping geyser. Your pastors have been vigilant in prayer about how to wisely and lovingly respond to this. This letter is intended to inform and encourage you as a follower of Christ who needs to know how to walk wisely in these present times (Eph. 5:15).

So, what should you do in light of COVID-19?

### 1. Remember

God is both all-knowing and all-powerful. This virus outbreak did not catch Him off guard, nor is it beyond His reach (Ps 115:3). God is totally and completely sovereign, declaring the beginning from the end (Isa 46:10). He has total control over every nation, stock market, and microbe on earth—nothing happens apart from His will (Matt 10:29). But, best of all, God is not just all-knowing and all-powerful; He is also good. He has promised that He will not permit anything—sickness and suffering included—to come into our lives that will not serve our ultimate good: becoming more like Christ (Rom 8:28-29). If you are in Christ, your circumstances—whatever they may be—are your servant for your good. This should give you great joy. This is not the first time sickness has ravaged the world or the church; God did not leave His throne then and He has not now.

### 2. Pray

Before and after Jesus teaches His followers to not be anxious about anything (Matt 6:25-34), He teaches them about prayer (Matt 6:5-18; 7:7-11). What's the lesson? You cannot avoid anxiety without prayer (Phil 4:6-7). As we see the rapid-fire rate of headlines about COVID-19 come our way, we can quickly spiral into a storm of fear: Everyone is panicking! This is a time where it is very tempting to give way to fretful anxiety, but it is not an inevitability for those who are in Christ. We have a loving, heavenly Father who is eager to hear our prayers and act, thus we need not worry. I am reminded of the lines from the old song *What a Friend We Have in Jesus*: "Oh, what

peace we often forfeit; Oh, what needless pain we bear; All because we do not carry; Everything to God in prayer.”

Our prayers are not just self-soothing mental murmurs or positive self-talk; they bring real, tangible change in the world (Matt 21:21-22; James 4:2-3; 5:15). Therefore,

- a. Pray that the Lord would mercifully bring an end to this pandemic.
- b. Pray for those infected with the disease and for their loved ones.
- c. Pray for the medical workers, researchers, and first responders.
- d. Pray that the Lord would guide our civil leaders to make wise decisions.
- e. Pray for our church (and others) to maintain a faithful witness to our community and to one another through this trial.
- f. Pray for your pastors as they seek to love, serve, and shepherd the flock wisely here at QBC.
- g. Pray for our church members who are most at-risk to COVID-19.
- h. Pray for your own and your family’s faithfulness to demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit when it may be tempting to be controlled by fear (Gal 5:22-23).

### 3. Learn

In the great deluge of news headlines, social-media posts, and conversations that have flooded our lives recently, it is very important for us to be careful about what we listen to. Be careful about listening to rumors or stories from disreputable sources, particularly if they tend to sensationalize headlines or run on “click-bait” tactics. Resist the urge to pass along stories that are not verified. You can visit the [CDC](#) or [WHO](#) website for a wealth of reliable information about the virus. You can also pay attention to our local [Benton-Franklin County Health Department](#) website for updates locally. At these websites you will also find information about how to practice safe sanitation and symptoms to be on the lookout for.

### 4. Understand

If your social media feed looks anything like mine, it is full of two basic responses: (1) This isn’t that big of a deal, chill out, or (2) THIS IS A REALLY BIG DEAL, FREAK OUT! I am reminded of Peter’s admonition: “The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self- controlled and sober-minded” and, “above all, keep loving one another

earnestly,” 1 Pet 4:7-8. When it feels like the sky is falling, how should Christians act? Self-controlled, level-headed, and full of love for other people. We should live like people who have a hope that is imperishable, undefiled, and kept in heaven for us, where no moth, rust, or virus can destroy (1 Pet 1:4; Matt 6:20). So we want to avoid the extreme responses that either run on sinful fear or lack of love for others. Instead we want to, “pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding,” Romans 14:19. Some people in our community are terrified, and we need to be sensitive to those fears. But we also need to avoid the temptation to stoke the flames of anxiety even higher. This should influence how we speak and what we share on social media as we seek to love one another well.

## 5. Witness

In 1866, during a deadly outbreak of cholera in London, [C.H. Spurgeon](#) encouraged young preachers: “And now, again, is the minister’s time; and now is the time for all of you who love souls. You may see men more alarmed than they are already; and if they should be, mind that you avail yourselves of the opportunity of doing them good. You have the Balm of Gilead; when their wounds smart, pour it in. You know of Him who died to save; tell them of Him. Lift high the cross before their eyes.” We live in a day where speaking or thinking about death is taboo. But this pandemic has uncomfortably forced the grim specter before us all; we are very aware of how fragile we are. Christians should not waste this opportunity; we should strive to alleviate suffering in any way we can, and, in the words of John Piper, especially seek to alleviate eternal suffering. Let’s let our good deeds, sacrificial love, and care for others be accompanied with the words of eternal hope, the gospel. Keep an eye out for who in your community is in need and seek to show Christ-like courageous love for them. Now is our time. Don’t miss it.

## 6. Gather

Gathering together for corporate worship is something that all Christians are commanded to do (Heb 10:25); the very word for church, *ekklesia*, means “assembly, gathering, or congregation.” The local church gathered together is a foretaste of the heavenly congregation that we will one day participate in (Heb 12:22-23). We gather to receive the grace of God’s read, prayed, and preached Word, the fellowship of God’s people, the joy of corporate singing, and participation in the sacraments. This is why we gather together each week on the Lord’s Day for worship. Currently, the Benton- Franklin Health Department is not advising churches in our area to cease gathering, but recommends practicing “social distancing” by “refraining from hugs, handshakes, and

any common vessel usage.” Thus, we encourage you to gather with us on Sunday for worship, but to do so wisely. That means:

- a. Practice good hand-washing (20 seconds) before, during, and after the service.
- b. Try to avoid touching your face.
- c. Cover coughs and sneezes and promptly wash your hands afterwards.
- d. Avoid handshakes and hugs (bump elbows instead).
- e. Keep a larger than normal buffer zone of personal space (approx. 3-6 feet).
- f. If you are sick (cough, fever, or other respiratory difficulties), please stay home.
- g. If you are over the age of 60, have a compromised immune system, a pre-existing respiratory or heart condition, or are pregnant, consider staying home.
- h. If you think you have contracted COVID-19, contact us immediately.
- i. All of the above similarly applies for our small groups.

We will be sanitizing all door knobs, handles, and other commonly touched surfaces before and after the gathering as well as continuing to practice the Lord’s Supper in the altered manner we practiced last week. We will encourage appropriate social distancing that still communicates the spirit of love and welcome that defines our congregation. We will also ask everyone to immediately wash their hands upon arrival.

## 7. Prepare

Washington State is currently the most infected state in America with COVID-19. While the disease is primarily localized in the Seattle area, it is likely it will spread to our area sometime soon, and this may bring with it certain restrictions. In the Seattle Metro area, restrictions have been put in place on gatherings larger than 250. While these restrictions have not come to us yet and our congregation is much smaller (typically ranging from 50-70 on Sunday), it is possible that, due to government restrictions, we may no longer be able to gather for worship on Sunday for a time. If this happens we will immediately notify everyone and work to still serve the congregation as best as we can through recording sermons or offering a livestream service, through providing guidance on how to lead your family in worship together, and, as long as it is still safe to practice, through continued home visitations by our pastors, and gathering as small groups. Please keep an eye on your email for further updates from us, or feel free to reach out to us for further questions ([info@qbc.org](mailto:info@qbc.org)).

Please continue to pray for your pastors through this all, that we would make wise and loving decisions for our body, for our neighbors, and for the glory of Christ.

In closing, meditate on the first question and answer from the classic Heidelberg Catechism (1563)

Q: What is our only hope in life and death?

A: That I am not my own, but belong with body and soul, both in life and in death, to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with His precious blood, and has set me free from all the power of the devil. He also preserves me in such a way that without the will of my heavenly Father not a hair can fall from my head; indeed, all things must work together for my salvation. Therefore, by His Holy Spirit He also assures me of eternal life and makes me heartily willing and ready from now on to live for Him.

With great love for you all,  
On behalf of the elders,

- Pastor Marc