



March 20, 2020

Dear Pastor,

Today, the world death count related to COVID-19 topped 10,000 people. Globally, confirmed cases are approaching a quarter million. This includes 22 cases and one death in Kansas. In media reports, you've seen entire countries and major U.S. cities paralyzed by this pandemic. Our Kansas public schools have been closed for the remainder of the school year, and Governor Kelly has issued stern guidelines for managing public gatherings and interaction.

The data changes, unfortunately, hour by hour. To say this is a time of uncertainty, is a huge understatement. And we've all heard, and maybe even feel, skepticism and the belief that shutting down public facilities and services is an over-reaction.

It is not. The reality is the spread of the virus across the United States is not slowing down. It is only a matter of time before we experience its impact in Independence. Let us repeat, it's not a matter of "if," it is a definite "when." We cannot afford to downplay this crisis.

At the City of Independence, we are dedicating much of our time and energy to preparation to ensure that OUR ENTIRE COMMUNITY is working together to:

- 1) First and foremost, MINIMIZE the impact to our citizens; and
- 2) Respond effectively to a local outbreak

WE MUST HAVE YOUR HELP, particularly with prevention. We cannot over emphasize the importance of **social distancing**. The best way – the only way - to effectively manage and eventually STOP THE SPREAD of illness is to physically distance ourselves from one another. This includes canceling all scheduled public gatherings – including in-person church services.

For the safety of your congregation – many of whom may already be among the most at risk due to advanced age or other health concerns - we strongly encourage you to discontinue your scheduled services for the time being. We encourage you to explore alternative methods for presenting sermons and communicating with church members, including pre-recorded or live presentations through social media. (For example, many local churches have opted to cancel in-person services in lieu of offering sermons via Facebook Live.) There are even digital/online apps available to allow parishioners to tithe remotely.

We certainly understand that our citizens – your parishioners – need their faith more than ever in unsettling times such as this. We also know that, like us, you want what's best for your members and the community as a whole. We appreciate your cooperation in considering these important efforts to help. With a unified effort, we can effectively weather this storm. Thank you. Please don't hesitate to contact us with any questions or concerns.

Kelly Passauer

Kelly Passauer,
Interim City Manager
City of Independence


David Cowan (Mar 20, 2020)

David Cowan, Director
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