



March 18, 2020

Dear Immanuel Family,

Our prayers for protection and provision remain with you, our country, and the world in the midst of all our efforts near and far to mitigate the novel coronavirus pandemic. As we have watched in the news, precautions against the disease have been heightened in all sectors of society and life. Although the church is not *of* the world, we are most certainly *in* the world. Therefore, in dependence upon God and in keeping with the guidance of the CDC, White House, Arizona and Pima County Public Health Services, and Presbytery, Session voted on the evening of March 17<sup>th</sup> to:

1. Temporarily suspend in-person sanctuary worship services, Christian Education classes, and all non-essential church meetings and outside groups on campus effective immediately through April 6<sup>th</sup>. As we gain more information with time, Session will communicate to the congregation the worship schedule for Easter Sunday (April 12<sup>th</sup>) and beyond.
2. Online worship services will be available at [www.immanuelpc.org](http://www.immanuelpc.org) each Sunday, beginning March 22<sup>nd</sup>. We are a worshipping community and worship will not stop at Immanuel because our chief end in life is to glorify and enjoy God. We will now express our worship in a new way in this precautionary season of social distancing. Each weekly online worship service will be posted on our church website late Saturday night to be viewed on Sunday morning or throughout the week. You will be able to download the accompanying bulletin for the service and a Bible Study based on the sermon passage for individual or small group use in the home. Once posted, the worship service can be viewed anytime.
3. It is unfortunately necessary for Music and the Word to be cancelled this year, but we will still have an online worship service on Palm Sunday, April 5<sup>th</sup>. The Saturday Vigil out in the Desert Sanctuary on April 11<sup>th</sup> has also been cancelled.
4. Memorial services and weddings during this season of precaution are limited to ten people present until April 6<sup>th</sup>.
5. In this season of social seclusion and distancing, we encourage members to communicate with the church via phone or email.
6. Immanuel will continue regular office hours, contingent upon the health of staff and other needs that may arise.
7. Church giving can be mailed to the church address (9252 E. 22<sup>nd</sup> St. Tucson, AZ 85710) or given online at [immanuelpc.org](http://immanuelpc.org).

8. We encourage healthy members of younger age demographics to volunteer their time by a “shop and drop” ministry where you pick up groceries or medications purchased by homebound members and drop them off at their doorstep. If you need your groceries or medications dropped off by your door, please let Immanuel know. Let us continue to love our neighbor through phone calls or emails to friends and loved ones to see how they are doing. Contact Kate at the church office for further details ([kate@immanuelpc.org](mailto:kate@immanuelpc.org)).

These are strikingly unusual times that we find ourselves in and these difficult decisions made by Session are not made lightly. In our prayer and deliberations, we sensed the wisdom of short-term stringent precautions for the long-term health and wellbeing of our church and society, in keeping with the prophet Jeremiah’s admonition to “seek the welfare of the city.” We know that for many of you, missing corporate worship and face to face fellowship for a time is a painful loss. You may even feel that the church has let you down. We understand and respect these very real feelings. We also encourage the congregation to reframe these temporary sacrifices as something you are giving up for Lent (and possibly longer). See this as fasting for a time from corporate worship and fellowship in order to grow in our faith and bless others. Know that we will once again worship and fellowship together, and those future times will be even more precious and meaningful for us.

We are giving up meeting in the sanctuary for Lent, but not giving up worship. We are fasting from corporate fellowship for a season, but not fasting from other ways to connect with one another. We remain the Body of Christ—whether in the form of the gathered church together or the scattered church apart. We are always spiritually united in Christ. Our bodies feel not only the pang of hunger and the dryness of thirst, but also the pang of loneliness. When you feel these longings, may they be a prayer and a thanksgiving to God for the worship and friendship we normally enjoy at the church. This season of solitude is an opportunity to trust God and enjoy our own company. See your solitude as a gift to your friends and our city. Use this season to spend more time in individual or family prayer and Bible reading. Enjoy the slower pace—see this time as spiritual retreat and rest. Jesus often took breaks in his ministry to go off to a remote place to pray. I am excited about the opportunity before us of online worship services to creatively reach even more people with the good news of Jesus Christ.

The session will keep you posted as important developments and decisions occur. Thank you for your understanding in this unique and challenging time we find ourselves in. And let us never forget the most oft repeated command in the Scriptures:

*Be not afraid, for I am with you.*

Still in One Peace,

Pastor John, on behalf of the Session