



## *COVID 19 Briefing for the Church*

*Prepared by Mike Metro, Elder Chair  
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### **My Introduction**

- 40 years in the fire service
- Several years as the Chief of Emergency Medical Services for LACoFD
- Developed the County Fire Department's Operational Plan for the 2009 pandemic of H1N1, or the "Swine Flu"

### **What Will This Briefing Cover?**

- Provide the facts that will enable you to have the proper perspective of the situation.
- Talk about what the COVID-19 virus is and how it is a strain of the flu and how it is different.
- Explain the signs and symptoms of COVID-19.
- What is a pandemic?
- Comparison of COVID-19 to the Swine Flu Pandemic of 2009
- What should you do to protect yourself?
- What the church will be doing to protect those God has entrusted to us.

### **Perspective**

- **Don't give into fear, just be smart.**
- COVID-19 or the Novel Coronavirus is a new strain of Influenza or the flu.
- The normal seasonal flu will impact between 15 million and 51 million people annually.
- As per the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in their March 19, 2020 report,<sup>1</sup> this year's "normal" flu season has seen 36 million illnesses, 370,000 hospitalizations, and 22,000 deaths. It has been characterized as widespread in 49 states. In Oregon, it is regional.
- In comparison, the Corona Virus or COVID 19, as per the CDC in their March 20, 2020 report there are 15,219 cases and 201 deaths within the US.<sup>2</sup> This is a death rate of 1.3% down from 2.5% on March 14<sup>th</sup>
- The number of COVID-19 cases has been and will likely continue to spike significantly as test kits become more widely available. This should not alarm us

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/index.htm>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-in-us.html>

because we will then find out that many people with mild symptoms of the flu actually had the COVID-19 virus.

- As of March 17, 2020 and per the World Health Organization or the WHO, there have been 184,976 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 7,529 deaths.<sup>3</sup>
- Of the 184,976 reported cases, some 81,116 cases are inside China with 3,231 deaths.
- There are reports that new diagnoses of the virus in China have plateaued. If this is true, that is great news.

### **Characteristics of COVID-19?**

- There is much yet to be learned about this disease.
- Both the flu and COVID-19 are contagious influenza viruses that cause respiratory illnesses.
- The symptoms of a normal flu fever are cough, muscle aches, headaches, and fatigue. In some cases, shortness of breath also occurs.
- The COVID-19 affects the lower respiratory tract, and only a few patients are found suffering from sore throat and runny nose.<sup>4</sup>
- The virus is shaped in such a way that it does not attach to the upper respiratory tract, such as in the nasal pathways. It attaches to the passageways in the lungs.
- The COVID-19 or Corona Virus is slightly more contagious. A person who has “the normal flu” will likely spread it to 1.5 other people. A person with Corona virus COVID-19 will likely spread it to 2.7 people.<sup>5</sup>
- The COVID 19 virus seems to have a higher fatality rate than the “normal flu.”
- Per a study of 44,672 patients in China who were confirmed to have had COVID-19:
  - 81% of those who were infected with COVID -19-had mild cases with flu like symptoms.
  - 14% were considered severe which was defined by cases with shortness of breath and other respiratory symptoms, but all survived.
  - 5% were critical with cases of respiratory failure, shock, etc. Half of these patients survived.
  - The overall fatality rate of the study group in China is currently estimated to be 2.3%. The fatality rate in the US will likely be much less with good data due to our health delivery system.
  - 60–69 years of age had a fatality rate of 3.6%.
  - 70–79 years of age had a fatality rate of 8%.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200311>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.thehealthsite.com/news/how-are-coronavirus-symptoms-different-from-those-of-seasonal-flu-and-cold-727732/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/coronavirus-may-spread-faster-than-who-estimate#Higher-estimates-than-WHO-predict>

- 80 years of age and older had a fatality rate of 15%.

### **Signs and Symptoms in the China Test Group:**

- 88% had a fever
- 68% had a dry cough
- 38% had fatigue
- 33% coughed up phlegm
- 33% had shortness of breath
- 15% had joint or muscle pain
- 14% had a sore throat
- 14% had a headache
- 11% had chills
- 5% had nausea or vomiting
- 5% had nasal congestion
- 4% had diarrhea

### **Definition of “Pandemic”**

- The term “pandemic” has no correlation to the seriousness of the virus.
- A pandemic is a new virus that spreads internationally as per the World Health Organization (WHO).
- A pandemic according to the CDC is a new virus that spreads regionally.
- WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic on March 11, 2020.
- Both the WHO and CDC declared the H1N1 or Swine Flu of 2009 a pandemic. H1N1 is now part of the normal “book” of influenza viruses that impact people each year for which there is a vaccine.

### **The 2009 Swine Flu Pandemic**

- To gain perspective, the statistics on the Swine Flu or H1N1 virus from 2009:
  - The height of the disease lasted from April 2009 to April 2010.
  - 60.8 million cases of H1N1.
  - 274,304 hospitalizations.
  - 12,469 deaths.
  - The pandemic began to taper off in November of 2009, 7 months after the WHO declared it a health emergency.
  - By May 2010, the number of cases was in steep decline, 11 months after the WHO declared it a health emergency.
  - By August 10, 2010, the WHO announced an end to H1N1 and that it moved into the post pandemic period.

- H1N1 is now a component of the normal “book” of influenza viruses which the widely available flu vaccine addresses.
- *It is important to know that the US government did not declare a health emergency for six months after the WHO declared H1N1 a health emergency. The government in 2009 did not take the very significant efforts that the current government is taking with the COVID-19 virus. This will likely result in less cases of COVID 19 than the US had with the Swine flu in 2009/10.*

### **What Must You Do and Know?**

- Don't give into fear, just be smart.
- Download the CDC App for your information source for COVID 19. Do not rely upon the internet for your facts. The CDC App is a wealth of information including recommendations for treatment, the latest statistics in the US, FAQ's, etc.
- If you have any symptoms, stay home.
- The virus spreads primarily by droplets that we expel by sneezing, coughing, and heavy speaking.
- Remember your hands are a pathway for you to spread the flu virus and to allow the flu virus to enter your body. You cough into your hand, you sneeze into your hand, and you wipe your nose with your hand. You touch surfaces that people have sneezed or coughed on with your hands.
- Wash your hands OFTEN.
- Carry hand sanitizer in your pocket or purse.
- If you can't find hand sanitizer, mix your own using 40% Aloe Vera Gel and 60% rubbing alcohol.
- Look at everything you touch as having infectious moisture droplets on that surface. That includes door knobs, grocery cart handles, elevator buttons, etc. Wash your hands after you touch anything.
- Be thoughtful about touching your own face.
- Wearing a mask when you are not infected is not effective. They can't seal well enough to keep out those infected moisture particles in the air.
- Maintain your personal space of 6 feet.
- Don't shake other people's hands.
- If you do get the flu and have shortness of breath, call your doctor.
- Use extra caution if you are in your 60's and have underlying health issues, especially respiratory conditions like asthma, emphysema, bronchitis, or COPD which is a general classification of obstructive lung diseases.

### **What Will Faith Community Church Do?**

- We will deploy hand sanitizers throughout the church.
- We will change protocols that will reduce the need to open closed doors.
- We will remind people how to stay healthy.
- We will change the way we collect our offering.
- We will change the way we do communion.
- We will continue to minister to those who are entrusted to our care.
- We will take this threat seriously.
- We will not give into fear, but will act smart.
- We will not feed into the hysteria.

**Stay smart, stay Safe and stay Healthy!**