

Covid-19 and a Ministry Continuity Plan

Because the pastor will come into contact with many people in the normal course of carrying out his pastoral ministry, and because the Coronavirus is highly contagious, the pastor would do well to have a plan in place in the event that he contracts Covid-19. The pastor should work in conjunction with his congregation, his congregation's elders, and with the brother pastors in his circuit to establish a ministry continuity plan to ensure that parish ministry can continue, to whatever extent possible.

A ministry continuity plan would include:

- The selection of a pastor (it may be a good idea to select two "backup pastors") who will conduct the official acts of a congregation (e.g. funerals, baptisms, weddings, worship services where the Lord's Supper is celebrated, deathbed visitations, etc.) as needed. It would be appropriate for the congregation to offer the pastor a stipend for his services should he be called upon to serve. A list of ways for members to participate in the worship services of other congregations during this time might also be helpful.
- The elders are to be instructed and trained so that they know and understand their role in providing spiritual care to the members while the pastor is incapacitated.
- The identification of other "non-pastoral" duties and responsibilities that are typically done by the pastor. These other "non-pastoral" duties and responsibilities should be delegated to other members of the congregation during that time.
- To ensure that church communication and business can continue uninterrupted, any usernames and passwords known only by the pastor should be shared with the secretary, congregational chairman and head elder for such things as the church's website, church's social media accounts, online programs, etc.
- A letter notifying the congregation that their pastor has contracted Covid-19 that should include: assurance that the congregation and her leadership had planned and made preparation for an event like this, that those who have had close, personal contact with the pastor in the previous 2 weeks should self-quarantine, that the ministry of the congregation will continue through the service of another pastor and the elders, a list of ways that members can participate in the worship services of other congregations during that time, and a plan to help care for the pastor and his family (e.g. supplying meals, picking up medications or supplies for the pastor and/or his family, etc.)

What to do if the pastor tests positive for Covid-19:

- The pastor should contact the congregation's head elder or chairman of the congregation to let them know that the ministry continuity plan will have to go into effect.
- The congregation's head elder or chairman (whomever is responsible for executing the ministry continuity plan) should contact the Circuit Visitor to make him aware of the situation. He should also contact the pastor who has been selected as the emergency pastor to let him know that his services will be needed.
- The pastor should, to the best of his ability, provide the names of those members that he has had close, personal contact with in the previous 2 weeks so that they can be notified and encouraged to self-quarantine.

- **ALL** areas within the church building in which the pastor has been and touched a surface should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected. This includes:
 - Pastor's office: his desk, chair(s), tables, countertops, computer keyboard, pens/pencils, books, etc.
 - The altar area: the altar, the pulpit, the lectern, the altar book, lectionary book, communion ware, baptismal font, etc.
 - The Sacristy
 - The church kitchen (if the pastor has been in there and used anything in it): the coffee maker/pot, the counters, any silverware the pastor may have used, the refrigerator door, microwave, etc.
 - Bathrooms
- Pastors with Covid-19 can stop home isolation under the following conditions:

If you will not have a test to determine if you are still contagious, you can leave home after these three things have happened:

- You have had no fever for at least 72 hours (that is three full days of no fever without the use medicine that reduces fevers)
AND
- Other symptoms have improved (for example, when your cough or shortness of breath have improved)
AND
- At least 7 days have passed since your symptoms first appeared

If you will be tested to determine if you are still contagious, you can leave home after these three things have happened:

- You no longer have a fever (without the use medicine that reduces fevers)
AND
- Other symptoms have improved (for example, when your cough or shortness of breath have improved)
AND
- You received two negative tests in a row, 24 hours apart.

Helpful Resources:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/guidance-community-faith-organizations.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/checklist.html>