

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS: COVID-19 “Coronavirus”

Dear Church Family –

COVID-19, commonly known as the new coronavirus, has been in the headlines for quite some time, now. Because of COVID-19, numerous state colleges and universities have suspended face-to-face classes for the rest of the school year, and a number of SDA institutions have made the same decision (such as Andrews University yesterday and Southern Adventist University today). Additionally, COVID-19 cases have been confirmed in Virginia by Sentara, with one of those cases being at RMH in Harrisonburg. The governor of Virginia has discouraged public gatherings in the commonwealth, though as I write this it is unknown if such gatherings will eventually be prohibited or not.

With these things in mind, what does this mean for the New Market Church?

As a campus church blessed with a congregation hailing from many different parts of the country and world, there are some precautions below that I’m hoping you’ll read and consider. But first, let me be clear: The precautions listed below are being shared with you now because COVID-19 is still a relatively unknown virus. In other words, we are being cautious because we still don’t know how contagious, dangerous, etc., the virus actually is, and are wanting to be vigilant until more definitive knowledge can be had. Consequently, if “good news” is forthcoming from the CDC and other credible sources in the days and weeks ahead, we will definitely reconsider some or all of what is found below.

Here’s what each member of our campus family should know at this time when thinking about attending Sabbath events at the New Market Church:

1. As of this writing, we are **not** canceling any of our worship services or Sabbath Schools.
2. **If you have experienced a fever within the last 24 hours or have a frequent cough/sneezing condition, we ask that you not attend church and instead enjoy the worship service at your home via our livestream.** Not only do we wish to prevent the spread of COVID-19, but also the spread of other illnesses which may be confused with this virus. The livestream can be found on our church website home page (www.newmarketadventist.org) and on our YouTube channel (search for “New Market Adventist Church” on YouTube or simply click on this link: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCFqR-mA2tEZA8LOc7FPHFZg>).
3. **We want to encourage our more senior members, those with compromised immune systems, and those with a history of heart and/or respiratory disease to consider worshipping via our livestream.** Again, the livestream can be found on our church website home page and on our YouTube channel.
4. **Beginning Sabbath, March 21, all-church potlucks will be cancelled until further notice.** Potlucks are something that we wish we could avoid cancelling! But until more is known about COVID-19, the risk of someone unknowingly infecting the food—food that will be eaten by

dozens of people—is simply too high. (We are not cancelling the March 14 potluck since Spring Break travel will generally not have taken place by then.)

5. If you do attend church for worship services or Sabbath School, we recommend the usual common-sense practices you've probably heard about in the news frequently: cover your cough, avoid shaking hands (yes, you have permission to smile and wave instead! 😊), wash your hands frequently, avoid touching your face, etc.

6. Regarding your tithes and offerings, please take advantage of Adventist Giving Online at this link: <https://www.newmarketadventist.org/online-giving/> . If you prefer, you may come to the church office during the week with your tithes and offerings.

7. In between our weekly worship services, we encourage you to continue following the recommendations from the CDC such as washing your hands for 20 seconds, staying home if you feel sick, covering coughs and sneezes, and cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces. For a full list of recommendations, go to <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/prevention.html> .

8. One of the best ways to ensure a healthy immune system is to continue to follow health practices that are well-known to Seventh-day Adventists: trust in God, eat healthy foods, get regular exercise, expose yourself to some sunlight, get some fresh air, and rest.

9. For the latest information regarding the New Market Church's response to the coronavirus, go to www.newmarketadventist.org and look at the links listed under "COVID-19 Resources and Updates" on the right-hand side of the home page. As always, you can also contact the church office for information, as well (at this time, office hours will remain the same).

And most important of all:

Amidst all of the questions and chaos surrounding this chapter of earth's history, let's remember that God is still on His throne. Though there is much we don't know about coronavirus, we DO know that God is more than able to give us what we need, not merely now, but at all times! The words of the psalmist are forever true: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear" (Psalm 46). Let's pray that God will guide each of us as we navigate through these challenging times.

Pastor Shane