

March 16, 2020

Dear Sinking Spring Church Family:

As I write to you this morning, I am reminded of the words of the Psalmist: *"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult"* (Psalm 46:1-3).

Perhaps it is a bit of an understatement to say that we, like the Psalmist, have experienced earth-shaking change over the course of the past week. The national response to the Coronavirus pandemic has knocked us off-kilter. It is certainly a tumultuous time for us all, and it is into that chaos that I am writing to share with you both resources and information concerning our congregation's ministry and worship.

First, please find attached to this letter the following five-documents: 1) a copy of my sermon from yesterday, 2) a beautiful poem that Georgia Crews provided to me that I hope you will use as your prayer for today, 3) a letter from the Virginia Department of Health, 4) a handout on household guidance for staying health in your home from the Ohio Department of Health, and 5) a statement about handwashing from the Center from Disease Control. I hope that you will find the attached documents helpful to you.

Second, please know that we are diligently working to keep the church building and facilities clean and safe. We are regularly disinfecting all bathrooms, door handles, handrails, pews, tables, chairs, etc. We want the church building to be a clean and safe environment. We want our facility to be as germ free as possible.

Third, the Session is meeting this evening to discuss and to implement a Coronavirus response plan for our congregation. The response plan that the Session shall consider will address how we will conduct worship, how we will do scheduled church activities, how we will perform congregational care, and how we will meet the needs of our neighbors and the larger community.

While I do not know the specific outcomes of tonight's meeting, I do know these things: We will continue to worship together, but it will be in a different way for a little while. We will continue to sing our faith, but it will be in a different manner for a time. We will continue to care about each other, but it will be in a different form for a time. We will continue to reach out to our community, but it will be in a different method for a while. We are living in a very fluid moment and for a while we will be learning as we go. Therefore, I hope and trust that we will be gracious and patient with each other as we live into our new shared reality.

As I think about this new and fluid moment, it also occurs to me that we are built for moments like this one. As the people of Jesus, we are made for this type of situation. Jesus entered the "zones of death and disease" with the life-changing and life-giving energies of God. While we are not Jesus, we do carry his capacity for new life in our bodies. Like Jesus, we carry the transformative grace and love of God into deathly places. I know this is a time of anxiety, fear, and uncertainty. It, however, is also a moment of great opportunity for us to be a powerful of exhibit of God's love and presence in our community. The

church exists for moments like this one. I know that we will rise to meet the great challenge before us with faith, hope, and love.

Please know that I will be writing to you again tomorrow with the specifics of our congregation's response plan. If you have concerns, feedback, ideas, questions, and suggestions that you would like to share, please do not hesitate to contact by phone or by email. I want to hear from you.

With every good wish for you on this day of God's sure making,

Rev. Kevin M. Campbell  
Interim-Transitional Pastor

*Sinking Spring Presbyterian Church  
Third Sunday in Lent  
March 15, 2020*

Prayer for Illumination

**You are the One who speaks to us in our deep need.  
By your Spirit and through your Word,  
Speak to us the words that lead to life.  
Teach us again about the source of the power for life.  
Quench our thirsty spirits with your living water,  
so that we maybe filled with courage, energy,  
freedom, and authority that we may be your  
agents of healing and life in the world.  
Speak to us.  
Let your Words be a spring gushing up in us  
to eternal life.  
We pray in the name of the One who is living  
water that quenches our thirsty souls,  
Jesus the Christ. Amen.**

Old Testament Reading

Exodus 17:1-7

*From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the Lord commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. The people quarreled with Moses, and said, "Give us water to drink." Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?" But the people thirsted there for water; and the people complained against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?" So Moses cried out to the Lord, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me." The Lord said to Moses, "Go on ahead of the people, and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink." Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled and tested the Lord, saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?"*

Psalter Reading

Psalms 95:1-11

*O come, let us sing to the Lord;  
let us make a joyful noise to the  
rock of our salvation!  
Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;  
let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!*

*For the Lord is a great God,  
and a great King above all gods.*

*In his hand are the depths of the earth;  
the heights of the mountains are his also.  
The sea is his, for he made it,  
and the dry land, which his hands have formed.*

*O come, let us worship and bow down,  
let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!  
For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture,  
and the sheep of his hand.*

*O that today you would listen to his voice!  
Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah,  
as on the day at Massah in the wilderness,  
when your ancestors tested me,  
and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work.  
For forty years I loathed that generation  
and said, "They are a people whose hearts go astray,  
and they do not regard my ways."  
Therefore in my anger I swore,  
"They shall not enter my rest."*

Gospel Reading

John 4:5-26

*So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.*

*A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water."*

*Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back." The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!" The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem." Jesus said to*

her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us." Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is speaking to you."

Leader: This is the Gospel of Christ for the people of God.

People: **Praise to you, O Christ**

Sermon

*"On the Way to Living Water"*

Rev. Kevin Campbell

Several years ago, I went to visit a patient in the hospital. At that time, this hospital was performing a major renovation to its parking decks. Suffice it to say, it took me a fair amount of time to find the exit to the parking deck when it was time to leave. When I finally arrived at the exit to the parking deck, I made a cheeky remark to the parking deck attendant as I was paying her. I said:

***"I have been around Robin Hood's barn twice trying to find the exit to this parking deck."***

Somewhat humored by my sarcasm, the parking deck attendant responded to me with her own cheeky remark. ***"Well,"*** she said, ***"I sure hope you stopped for a drink of water on your trip around the barn."***

We all get thirsty. There are moments when we all feel emotionally, mentally, physically, and spiritually parched, and we need to stop and to have a drink of water—to nourish the body, to quench the mind, to enliven the spirit, and to find new life.

The theme of water is an appropriate one for Lent as we continue to be on the way. Lent, like the journey of faith, is about being in thin places without resources and being driven back to the elemental reality of God, the reliability of God, and our capacity to trust God in the thin places where there are no resources. That is what both Lent and faith are about, are they not? They are about coming face-to-face with God in our need because there is no alternative. Being on the way in Lent is about considering and deciding again about the raw, elemental need of our life.

## I

Nothing represents the deep, primal need of our life better than the image or metaphor of water. Throughout the Bible, water is ubiquitous and plays a central role. It is a complex symbol that is pregnant with meaning:

- In the opening creation poetry of the Book of Genesis, water is present with the Spirit before creation and helps to give life to the creation (Genesis 1:1-2).
- Water is a sign of God's power, in the Book of Exodus, with the drowning of Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea (Exodus 14:26-29).
- The Psalmist sings that water reveals his or her deep need for God: *"As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God"* (Psalm 42:1).
- The poetry of Isaiah envisions water symbolizing the promise of God's restorative, healing care of creation when *"the desert shall flow with streams and fountains will break forth in the thirsty ground"* (Isaiah 35:6-7).
- Amos uses the image of water to be like a great torrent of justice and righteousness, when the prophet declares: *"But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream"* (Amos 5:24).

Even the New Testament, water represents many things:

- it is a sign of welcome into God's kingdom as John the Baptist baptized people in the Jordan River (Luke 3:3-9);
- it is a metaphor of instruction as Jesus gave his most important sermon by the Sea of Galilee (Matthew 5:1-2);
- it is a symbol of perception and insight as Jesus heals a man born blind by the Pool of Siloam (John 9:1-12);
- it is the image of service as Jesus washes his disciples feet and commands them *"to love one another as Jesus has loved them"* (John 13:1-11, 31-35).
- And then, in the concluding scene of the Book of Revelation, life-giving water flows from the throne of God, from the very being of God's own self (Revelation 22:1).

Water is one way that we are invited to consider our deep connections to the earth, to our neighbors, and most especially to God. Our need for water reflects our thirsty need for God. Our quest—our spiritual journey—for God is tightly connected to the image and human need for water. From water comes life!

## II

Our gospel reading from John 4 is a complex drama that connects our need for water with our deep need for God. The beginning point of our narrative is that Jesus is tired and thirsty from his journey from Judea to Galilee and asks a Samaritan woman for a drink of water. Jesus' request for a drink of water catches the Samaritan woman off-guard, and she responds to him, not with a glass of water, but with a comment about his social graces and etiquette. She says:

*"How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans)."*

*(John 4:9)*

We could spend a great deal of time parsing the Samaritan woman's response to Jesus. We could reflect upon the relationship between Jews and Samaritans, women and men, and social customs and norms in the ancient world. However, we are not. I, instead, want us to notice something else in this transaction between Jesus and the woman. What happens in this interaction is that Jesus turns the water question into the God question, into a reflection on the One who is the true source of life that quenches our most elemental thirst.

After asking the woman for a drink of water, Jesus quickly reverses field and says to the woman:

*"If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water" (John 4:11).*

And then, Jesus says to the woman in her perplexity:

*"Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life" (John 4:13-14).*

And the woman, in trust, responds:

*"Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water" (John 4:15).*

The exchange between Jesus and the woman is a dramatic way to make a unique theological claim about Jesus. In this narrative, Jesus is seen as doing only what God can do, that is, Jesus is the exhibit of the life-giving power of God. It is only God—and so Jesus—who gives water in a barren land. It is only God—and so Jesus—who cleanses the leper. It is only God—and so Jesus—who gives sight to the blind. It is only God—and so Jesus—who gives speech to the mute. It is only God—and so Jesus—who sets the prisoner free. It is only God—and so Jesus—who welcomes the stranger, eats with sinners, tax collectors, and prostitutes. It is only God—and so Jesus—who turns the reality of death into resurrection, the stunning gift of life. It is only God—and so Jesus—who gives abundant life.

It is crystal clear that our Gospel narrative has taken the material, concrete reality of water and transposed it into a polyvalent figure. Our drama layers the metaphors for water: liberation, yearning for salvation, hospitality, healing, and source of life. But, undergirding that web of images is this: **Water is now gospel; water is the good news.** Water is the sign and symbol that in Jesus we are given a new quality of life, as our story asserts, *"a spring of water gushing up to eternal life" (John 4:14b).*

This is extraordinarily good news for the Samaritan woman. Who would have thought such quenching was possible for the woman? Who would have thought that a woman who had five husbands would have received living water, would be given new life? Our Gospel drama dares to assert that a life-giving alternative to brokenness and failure and death is possible. That is good news.

### III

Our dramatic Gospel narrative with its metaphor of water is good news, and it pushes in a lot of different directions. Consider, therefore, these three extrapolations of the water giving, life-giving God. Listen for all three in your life:

- 1) The dramatic transaction between Jesus and the Samaritan woman is a reenactment of our reading from Exodus 17. Like our gospel reading, the Exodus text turns the question of water into a God question. In this narrative, Israel is at Rephidim in the wilderness. Nobody knows where that was. It is simply a place with lack. It was a hot and dry place, and Israel had no water. So, they complained against God and Moses, thinking that they were entitled to water. In their complaint, they dare to voice this question:

*"Is the Lord among us or not" (Exodus 17:7b)?*

Israel asks the God question about the water problem because they knew that they were up against it in their need and had no alternative.

Of course, Israel's deep question is resoundingly answered. Yes! The Lord is among us. Yes! God is reliable. Yes! God is trustworthy. God gives water. From the hard rock of anxiety and scarcity, God gives water to Israel. Quite tersely, God answers the doubt and fear of Israel:

*"Go on ahead of the people and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink" (Exodus 17:5-6).*

Our text does not explain how water can be given from a rock. It does not matter, because the story is about the reliability, the faithfulness of God when we find ourselves in thin places with limited resources.

- 2) While the narrative memory of Exodus 17 is about God's faithfulness and the miracle of the water in the desert, the event is remembered negatively as a time when Israel did not trust God, but tested God by requiring God to meet a concrete, material crisis; meaning, trust would have known that without anxiety and fear that God would have provided what was needed. Distrust, however, is the reduction of God to a material exhibit.

The negative judgment about our story is given in Psalm 95. I do not know what you heard when we read the Psalm earlier, but the first part of the Psalm is a glad celebration of God's presence, and it is not the part that concerns us. It is, rather, the second part of the Psalm that concerns, the part that turns dark and negative:



*O that today you would listen to his voice!  
Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah,  
as on the day at Massah in the wilderness,  
when your ancestors tested me,  
and put me to the proof, though  
they had seen my work.  
For forty years I loathed that generation  
and said,  
“They are a people whose hearts go astray,  
and they do not regard my ways.”  
Therefore in my anger I swore,  
“They shall not enter my rest.”*  
(Psalm 95:7b-11)

God does not like to be tested. God does not want to jump through hoops, because God will give what is needed without coercive demands. In contrast to our Gospel story and the Samaritan woman, the Psalm describes the Exodus moment as one of not trusting God and making material gifts a measurement of God's goodness.

- 3) The third extrapolation concerns us as we are on the way in Lent and as we each are on the way in our various journeys of faith. As our assigned texts frame our Christian imagination regarding water, there is an increasing awareness that we live in a world of resources that are thinner than we imagined. Water is under siege all over the planet, watersheds are collapsing, streams and rivers dying, even once safe water systems face threat. Perhaps you have heard it said, like me, “The next great war will not be about oil, but water.”

Water is a continuing source of life for our planet. It covers seventy-one percent of the earth's surface. It is plentiful and necessary, but rare in its useable forms. Only two percent of the earth's water is useable by human beings, but most of it is trapped under ground. Only a very small fraction of the world's water, less than 0.3 percent is readily available freshwater—our rivers, lakes, and streams—which we drink, wash in, and use to raise our food.

The story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well, the Israelites at Rephidim, and our Psalm—the search for the water of salvation and the search for safe drinking water—may be more urgent than ever.

#### IV

Our water stories are set before us to stir our theological imaginations. They prod us to consider our deep connections to God, to our neighbors and to the earth as we undertake the journey of faith. So, in our reflection, our texts move this way:

- \*to show that Jesus is the one who satisfies our deepest thirsts;
- \*to show that doubting God is an act of rebellion when we are invited to trust;

\*to show us that water is a polyvalent gift of life for the earth given by God.

I suspect that those of us who trust the gospel are deeply torn. On the one hand, we are deeply committed to Jesus; we have received this *"spring of water gushing up to eternal life."* On the other hand, we are so anxious and uncertain and fearful that we seek in many other places water that does not satisfy. Those other places are mirages that look like remembered water, but are not really water that can satisfy and quench our thirst. They are mirages of nostalgia, sex, money, power, and violence. Our society is deep into such mistaken self-security, a powerful temptation to us all.

Lent is a time to ponder where we have tried to find water that does not quench our thirst. Have you noticed that we are thirsty? Have you noticed that we are not made satisfied and happy by such other resources? Lent is a time for noticing and choosing again, choosing what the world doubts:

\*a rabbi at a well with a promise to never thirst again;

\*a rock in the wilderness from which God brings water.

And we with our deep, unquenchable thirst on the way; saying,

***Sir, give me this water,***

***So that I may never again be thirsty***

***Or have to keep coming here for water.***

Indeed, give me this water and I will thirst again. Amen.

Our daughter who is very worried about our getting sick suggested that I share this with you.

Georgia Crews

My yoga teacher sent this poem in her class cancellation email. Maybe you can share it with your Minister♥

By: Reverend Lynn Ungar, Unitarian Universalist poet laureate...

Pandemic

What if you thought of it

as the Jews consider the Sabbath—  
the most sacred of times?

Cease from travel.

Cease from buying and selling.

Give up, just for now,  
on trying to make the world  
different than it is.

Sing. Pray. Touch only those  
to whom you commit your life.

Center down.

And when your body has become still,  
reach out with your heart.  
Know that we are connected  
in ways that are terrifying and beautiful.  
(You could hardly deny it now.)

Know that our lives  
are in one another's hands.  
(Surely, that has come clear.)

Do not reach out your hands.

Reach out your heart.

Reach out your words.

Reach out all the tendrils  
of compassion that move, invisibly,  
where we cannot touch.

Promise this world your love--  
for better or for worse,  
in sickness and in health,  
so long as we all shall live.

--Lynn Ungar 3/11/20



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## COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA Virginia Department of Health

### *Mount Rogers Health District*

201 Francis Marion Lane  
Marion, VA 24354

March 2, 2020

Dear Faith Community Leaders:

The Mount Rogers Health District is closely monitoring an outbreak of respiratory illness caused by a novel coronavirus (termed "COVID-19"). A novel coronavirus is a new coronavirus strain that has not been previously found in people. Symptoms have included cough, fever, and difficulty breathing. On January 21, 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced the first confirmed case in the United States in a traveler returning from Wuhan, China.

### **Prevalence and Risk**

- Four coronaviruses infect people that cause the common cold. Two coronaviruses cause severe lung infection, which are called SARS and MERS. COVID-19 is a new type of coronavirus that is causing severe lung infections that originated in Wuhan, China in December 2019.
- 96% of cases have occurred in China.
- 0.07% of the cases have occurred in the United States.
- Flu deaths in the United States from October 1, 2019 - February 15, 2020 are estimated to range between 16,000-41,000, which is 6-15 times greater than the COVID-19 deaths worldwide.
- There have been almost 800 flu deaths in the state of Virginia so far this flu season.
- **The CDC considers the immediate risk of COVID-19 infection to the general American public low at this time.**

### **Prevention and Intervention**

- Encourage your congregation to adhere to the following guidelines
  - Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, and help young children do the same. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Wash your hands especially after coughing and sneezing, before and after caring for an ill person, and before preparing foods and before eating.
  - Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and then throw the tissue in the trash.
  - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.

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## COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA Virginia Department of Health

### *Mount Rogers Health District*

*201 Francis Marion Lane  
Marion, VA 24354*

- Avoid close contact (such as kissing, sharing cups, or sharing eating utensils) with people who are sick.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects, such as toys and doorknobs, especially if someone is sick.
- Stay home when you are sick, except when you need to get medical care.
- During gatherings:
  - Ask that people refrain from close contact (shaking hands, hugs, etc)
  - Do not pass offering plates (have a basket at the entry/exit where people can place offerings directly)
  - For communion or other similar activities – considering postponing or reevaluating the way it is offered. For example, instead of sharing one communal loaf or cup, offer individually prepared or packaged bread and juice.
  - Strongly encourage people to stay home if they do not feel well – if you have the technology to stream services/gatherings, encourage people to participate in that manner if necessary.
  - Make hand sanitizer and tissues available
- For your facility:
  - Routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces, such as countertops and doorknobs. Use the cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas and follow the directions on the label.
    - No additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is recommended at this time.
  - Provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces (for example, doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks) can be wiped down by employees or congregants before each use
- Other things to note:
  - Masks are not recommended for the general public
  - If authorities call for social distancing, consider how that would impact your scheduled activities – cancelling them and offering participation through alternative technological methods (skype, teleconference, streaming, etc)

Please share resources with your congregation, including:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus>
- The World Health Organization's website: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS  
SERVING THE PEOPLE OF

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COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA  
Virginia Department of Health  
*Mount Rogers Health District*  
201 Francis Marion Lane  
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- The Virginia Department of Health website: <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/surveillance-and-investigation/novel-coronavirus/>
- 1-877-ASK-VDH3 (1-877-275-8343)
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/share-facts-stop-fear.html>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>
- <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html/>

The most important thing is not to create a panic. Influenza still has higher associated morbidity and mortality rates, and these preventative steps will also help stop the spread of influenza, colds, and stomach bugs.

If you have further questions, please contact Julia Banks, Epidemiologist, Mount Rogers Health District, 276-730-3180 (office), 276-733-2475 (cell), [julia.banks@vdh.virginia.gov](mailto:julia.banks@vdh.virginia.gov). Thank you for your efforts to keep everyone in the Mount Rogers Health District safe and healthy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Karen Shelton MD".

Karen Shelton MD  
Director Mount Rogers Health District





## HOUSEHOLD CHECKLIST

The Ohio Department of Health offers these guidelines to prepare your household for an outbreak of any infectious disease. Please stay calm and prepare, seek out accurate information, and be kind, staying mindful of actions that could perpetuate any discrimination or stigma associated with COVID-19 or other infectious diseases.

*For additional information, please visit [coronavirus.ohio.gov](https://coronavirus.ohio.gov).*

### PREVENTION

- 1 Use personal prevention protection methods at all times, whether at home, work, school, community events, or elsewhere:
  - 2 Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds; dry hands with a clean towel or air dry hands.
  - 2 Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water are unavailable.
  - 2 Cover your mouth with a tissue or sleeve when sneezing or coughing.
  - 2 Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
  - 2 Stay home when you are sick.
  - 2 Avoid contact with people who are sick.
- 1 Keep soap, hand sanitizer, and tissues on hand. Make them easily accessible at home and carry with you when possible.
- 1 Keep household cleaning spray or wipes readily available. Always use according to label instructions.
- 1 Clean “high-touch” surfaces daily. These include counters, tabletops, doorknobs, light switches, bathroom fixtures, toilets, phones, keyboards, tablets, and bedside tables. Also clean any surfaces that may have blood, stool, or body fluids on them.
- 1 Don’t share personal items such as water bottles.
- 1 Keep informed of recommendations of public health officials at [www.cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov), [www.odh.ohio.gov](https://www.odh.ohio.gov), and your local health department web site.

**Note:** The use of face masks by people who are not sick is not recommended to protect against respiratory diseases. Face masks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent spread of the disease and by health care workers and others taking care of someone in a close setting.

## PLANNING

- Keep an adequate supply of water, food, and pet food in your home. If you take prescription drugs, contact your health care provider, pharmacist, or insurance provider about keeping an emergency supply at home.
- Talk to caregivers about backup plans in the event a primary caregiver becomes ill.
- Meet with immediate family, relatives, and friends to discuss possible needs in the event of an infectious disease outbreak.
- Talk with neighbors about planning. Join neighborhood information webpages or emails.
- Plan ways to care for people at higher risk, including the very young, older people, people with chronic diseases, and people with compromised immune systems.
- Identify community organizations that may be able to help if you need information, health care services, support or other resources.
- Create an emergency contact list of family members, friends, neighbors, health care providers, teachers, employers and others.
- Keep a working thermometer and respiratory medications, like decongestants, expectorants, and analgesics (ibuprofen, acetaminophen), on hand.
- Choose a room and, if possible, a bathroom, in your home that could be used to separate family members who become sick.
- Learn about the preparedness plans of your children's childcare facilities, schools, and/or colleges.
- Plan for childcare should schools temporarily close.
- Ask about your employers' preparedness plans, including sick-leave policies and telework options.
- Be prepared to cancel or postpone your attendance at large events, such as sporting events, conferences, and worship services, and to stay away from crowds.
- Be prepared for cancellation or disruptions of public transportation services.
- Be prepared to cancel non-essential travel plans.
- Get a flu shot this season if you haven't already. It won't protect against COVID-19, but it can help protect against flu or lessen symptoms if you get it, lessening the strain on health care facilities.



## Handwashing: Clean Hands Save Lives

### When and How to Wash Your Hands

Handwashing is one of the best ways to protect yourself and your family from getting sick. Learn when and how you should wash your hands to stay healthy.

#### Wash Your Hands Often to Stay Healthy

You can help yourself and your loved ones stay healthy by washing your hands often, especially during these key times when you are likely to get and spread germs:

- Before, during, and after preparing food
- Before eating food
- Before and after caring for someone at home who is sick with vomiting or diarrhea
- Before and after treating a cut or wound
- After using the toilet
- After [changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet](#)
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- After touching an animal, animal feed, or animal waste
- After handling pet food or pet treats
- After touching garbage



#### Follow Five Steps to Wash Your Hands the Right Way

Washing your hands is easy, and it's one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of germs. Clean hands can stop germs from spreading from one person to another and throughout an entire community—from your home and workplace to childcare facilities and hospitals.

Follow these five steps every time.

1. **Wet** your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
2. **Lather** your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
3. **Scrub** your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the "Happy Birthday" song from beginning to end twice.
4. **Rinse** your hands well under clean, running water.
5. **Dry** your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

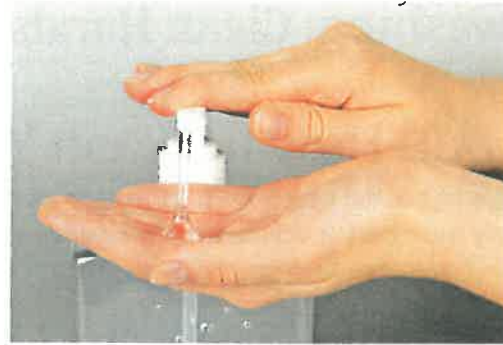
Why? Read the science behind the recommendations.

## Use Hand Sanitizer When You Can't Use Soap and Water

Washing hands with soap and water is the best way to get rid of germs in most situations. If soap and water are not readily available, you can use an alcohol-based [hand sanitizer](#) that contains at least 60% alcohol. You can tell if the sanitizer contains at least 60% alcohol by looking at the product label.

Sanitizers can quickly reduce the number of germs on hands in many situations. However,

- Sanitizers do not get rid of all types of germs.
- Hand sanitizers may not be as effective when hands are visibly dirty or greasy.
- Hand sanitizers might not remove harmful chemicals from hands like pesticides and heavy metals.



You can use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.

## How to use hand sanitizer

- Apply the gel product to the palm of one hand (read the label to learn the correct amount).
- Rub your hands together.
- Rub the gel over all the surfaces of your hands and fingers until your hands are dry. This should take around 20 seconds.

**Caution!** Swallowing alcohol-based hand sanitizers can cause alcohol poisoning if more than a couple of mouthfuls are swallowed. Keep it out of reach of young children and supervise their use. Learn more [here](#).



## New Handwashing Campaign: *Life is Better with Clean Hands*

To celebrate [Global Handwashing Day](#) on October 15, CDC has launched the *Life is Better with Clean Hands* campaign. This campaign encourages adults to make handwashing part of their everyday life and encourages parents to wash their hands to set a good example for their kids. Visit the [Life is Better with Clean Hands](#) campaign page to download resources to help promote handwashing in your community.

For more information on handwashing, visit CDC's [Handwashing website](#) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.

## More Information

- [Handwashing: Clean Hands Save Lives](#)