



# ROYAL LANE BAPTIST CHURCH

*Diverse People United in Christ*

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*March 9, 2020*

*The Mosaic*

*Special Edition*

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## ***Preparing for the Coronavirus***

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Royal Lane Baptist Church – Dallas, Texas

The key to managing COVID-19 is to slow its spread as much as possible until a vaccine becomes available in about a year, experts are saying. “Realistically, it’s hard to prepare for a long duration event of unknown consequence, so we’re doing the best we can,” said Dr. John Carlo, a physician who served as medical director of Dallas County Health and Human Services during the 2009 H1N1 swine flu epidemic and is now CEO of Prism Health North Texas. “I think this is going to be a bit of a marathon rather than a sprint.”

The key for organizations, faith communities, and places of business is to plan for the many months it will take for the coronavirus to spread and eventually burn itself out. Without a vaccine or cure, Royal Lane will have to guard as much against infection as possible while caring for those who are vulnerable. A marathon requires prolonged and dedicated preparation, so the time to begin is now.

### **Remaining Hopeful**

If we believe in a God of love and a theology of hope, we should try to refrain from feeding fear and anxiety. Our society and the media seek to shock us in order to grab our attention. As informed Christians, we should take that shock and infuse it with compassion and the power of our fellowship. We will get through this difficult experience together as a congregation and as the people of God.

### **Reciting Prayer**

Prayer is key. We will add the coronavirus to our prayer list at church and the deacons will add this need to their actions of prayer and care. Royal Lane will pray for all of those affected and the medical and political leaders seeking to inform and protect us.

### **Reaching out**

The most vulnerable are those in low-income communities. These communities have limited resources and information. Many of these people rely on churches and organizations for daily services and care. Although being personally safe is of utmost importance, will other congregations in the city continue to participate in Healing Hands, Hope Supply, North Dallas Shared Ministry and Meals on Wheels? What will the members of low-income communities in Dallas do without faith communities and their services? Christians throughout time have always been on the frontline during epidemics offering comfort and care. How might we, as Royal Lane, continue to help those in need while staying safe ourselves?

The ministers and deacons will take necessary precautions as we do during flu season. We will consult appropriate hospital and medical representatives if a pandemic occurs. These healthcare officials will give us a better idea of what we can and cannot do. We will continue to have good hygiene, a no touch policy, and take necessary precautions when visiting church members in the hospital.

### **Restructuring our Fellowship Time**

There are those who might desire to avoid group meetings as much as possible. Yet, church and fellowship are about gathering together. And Royal Lane will continue to gather for worship, Sunday School, and small groups until the Department of State Health Services determines that public meetings should be canceled. As of this article, the DSHS claims there are 3 cases of coronavirus in Fort Bend, 5 in Harris County, and 1 in Collin County. As we meet together, I recommend we fist bump, smile and nod, or touch elbows instead of shaking hands. We can be honest and light-hearted about our uncertainties in these odd and uncomfortable meeting and greeting changes. We will have as many hand sanitizer bottles as we can find around the church for your use. However, health professionals say washing hands with soap and water is more effective than sanitizer use. Our housekeeper, Rosa Barrientos, is taking extra care in cleaning doorknobs, light switch plates, and other high-touched facility items.

### **Rethinking Worship**

The world continues to grow digitally and technologically at a rapid pace. We already livestream our worship services and most phones have the ability to produce and distribute videos. If gatherings become restricted, Royal Lane will still stream sermons, devotionals, music, and prayers. Our worship of God and growing each other in mind and spirit will continue. And although Royal Lane has reserve funds in place if offerings are not received in worship, we have several online giving options through the webpage and by text. We ask that financial giving continue. The coronavirus will eventually disappear and our church will need to keep moving forward to pay our bills and help the community.

### **Revamping Communion**

It is important when a family gathers together that they share a meal. This is true for the family of God. Royal Lane will continue to have communion once a month. The deacons and ministers of the church will make sure the spread of germs is minimized during communion. When flu season was in full effect, we had deacons wash hands and use hand sanitizer before placing the bread in your hand. I believe more changes to the process are needed. Some churches are wearing medical gloves or using tongs and living with the unsettled feeling these images bring to communion. I believe this is the best protocol for our congregation, as well. Royal Lane will also use individual cups for juice. We will make sure that hand sanitizer is available when receiving the elements utilizing a third deacon. Remembering the sacrifice of Jesus through the partaking in the bread and cup is a crucial element to worship and will be done in a thoughtful and cautious way.

### **Remember the Marathon**

As I previously mentioned, this is a marathon, not a sprint. We will be prepared. And as we prepare our church and the city of Dallas to take care of ourselves and one another, we should go back to the very first point on this list – remain hopeful.