



Monday, March 16, 2020

Dear Grove Families,

As a church family and as individual families, we are being challenged to adjust worship and personal lives in response to COVID-19. With the cancellation of school, worship, choir rehearsals, Sunday School, and sporting events, routines we had established for children are being drastically altered. Children will question these changes and child behaviors may change. For this reason, we need to think about how we will talk to our children regarding what is happening in the community and around the world and need to establish new routines to maintain spiritual and behavioral stability.

Here are some things to think about in relation to your children and the uncertainty of the COVID-19.

**Children do experience stress and anxiety:** From infancy on, children pick up cues from the adults around them, particularly parents. They interpret body language early on. They pick up on adult stress and anxiety. So be conscious of your words and mannerisms when talking to or in front of children. (You may think they are not listening, but they are.) Be careful what information on the radio, TV or computer they are taking in. (Again, you may think they are in the back seat of the car fighting with sibling and not listening to the radio, but they are.) It is appropriate to be matter-a-fact. “We are not going to church for a while, so we don’t share germs with others. We can pray, sing, worship at home.”

**Respond to each child as the age requires:** Being age appropriate and not giving children more than is understood at their age helps keep stress and anxiety down. Young children have little awareness of the global world and of time. Describing what a pandemic is and incubation periods might be scary. Simple statements are best. “Many people are getting sick and we can help by washing our hands and staying home.” Older children may be ready for deeper conversations, but you may not want to have them in front of younger siblings. You may need to caution older siblings to not scare younger ones.

**Focus on what children can do for others rather than making them the possible target of the disease:** If children are being told all these precautions are being done to protect them (even though we know they are), it makes them feel like a powerless target. Instead focus on what they can do to help others, they can stay home, they can wash their hands, they can pray for people, they can send a card to someone in the congregation. Think together as a family, ways you can share Christ’s love with others without meeting in person – extra skyping with grandma, phone calls, email, text, etc. You can have your child call someone in the Sunday School class and they tell each other their favorite Bible story.

**Assure children this is for a period of time:** Because of the young child’s limited understanding of time this is difficult and you can expect throughout the days and weeks that backseat long-trip phenomenon of -- Are we there yet? Are we there yet? Are we there yet? Everyone needs to be patient. Things will return to normal someday. Children just need extra assurance of that.

**Listen to one another:** In our highly mobile and active culture, families are not used to being confined with one another. So listen to one another and yourselves. Is boredom or frustration or anxiety setting in? Ask your children if they have questions. Thank goodness it is spring and families can get out in their yards.

We must remember that God is present in all of this. God’s Spirit inspires us to find new ways to worship. God’s love binds the faithful together. As time goes on, I will provide more activity ideas and at home devotional ideas.

You are all in my prayers,  
Lynne Pabst  
Director of Christian Education