

## Health is Wealth; Make it Last a Lifetime!

Cornelia Pearson, RN, MN

A number of years ago, the New York State Health Department produced a poster that states “*Health is Wealth; Make it Last a Lifetime.*” I find these words most impressive today as I look at that poster while reading the daily statistics on COVID-19. With the arrival of cooler weather, an increase in pre-COVID-19 indoor activities including work, school, restaurants, bars, and sports, the United States and other parts of the world are seeing a surge in the number of active COVID-19 cases and deaths. Of course, this virus is not just a little bug like the common cold that will go away with no further side effects after seven to ten days. It is also not the elderly who are the only ones at risk for getting the coronavirus.

It is estimated that 45.4 percent of U.S. adults are at increased risk for complications from coronavirus due to hypertension, diabetes, respiratory disease, cardiovascular disease or cancer. This means that if they contract the virus their health is at great risk not just while they are recovering, if they do recover, but also for years to come. There is now also evidence that even in mildly symptomatic individuals there may be significant long-term impacts on one's health. We hear daily about the increased risk due to age, but little about the risk to younger individuals. According to Adams, Katz and Grandpre, rates from complications increased incrementally by age from 19.8 percent for persons 18 to 29 years of age to 80.7 percent for persons equal to or greater than 80 years of age. These rates varied by state, race/ethnicity, health insurance status and employment. According to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, hospitalization and death rates due to COVID-19 also rise incrementally as individuals age. Ryosuke Omori, PhD, research professor at Hokkaido University in Japan, developed a mathematical model to calculate COVID-19 susceptibility by age group, including social contacts and activities outside the home. The model showed that a specific age was not associated with susceptibility to the disease. The bottom line is that anyone at any age can contract this virus and spread it to others.

So as we continue to face this pandemic with yet no vaccine to protect any of us regardless of age, what do we do? The obvious answer is to practice social distancing, wear a mask, wash your hands often, and limit the places and time that you choose to go out. If you have health risks that make you more vulnerable, limit your shopping to places with hours that cater to individuals with health risks – usually early in the morning. Daily remind your family to be safe!

I recently attended a Southeastern Synod Mutual Ministry Committee meeting where a member shared a *Prayer for A Pandemic* written by the Ursuline Sisters of Louisville. Here are the words from the Sisters' prayer.

May we who are merely inconvenienced remember those whose lives are at stake.

May we who have no risk factors remember those most vulnerable.

May we who have the luxury of working from home remember those who must choose between preserving their health or making the rent.

May we who have the flexibility to care for our children when their schools close remember those who have no options.

May we who have to cancel our trips remember those who have no safe place to go.

May we who are losing our margin money in the tumult of the economic market remember those who have no margin at all.

May we who settle in for a quarantine at home remember those who have no home.

As fear grips our country, let us choose love.

During the time when we cannot physically wrap our arms around each other, let us yet find ways to be the loving embrace of God to our neighbors. Amen.

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### **Have you had your flu shot?**

#### References:

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