

March 17, 2020

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

Grace and peace to you on this St. Patrick's Day!

I am writing to update you on the Coronavirus response plan that was established for our congregation by the Session and to request your help in implementing the following course of action:

First, the Session is cancelling all church activities, including worship, for this Sunday (March 22<sup>nd</sup>) only. While we are unable to worship together this Sunday, please know that an audio file and a written copy of my sermon will be uploaded to our church website. I hope that you will use both the audio of my sermon and my written sermon text for your personal devotional time and your family's worship practice this weekend. It had been our hope to either live-stream my sermon or upload a video file of my sermon to the church's website. Currently, we are unable to provide either a live-stream or recorded video of my sermon in a helpful or useable manner. We are aware that we need this capability, and we are working on acquiring the capacity and the technology to live-stream our worship services in the future.

Perhaps you are wondering why Session has cancelled congregational activities and worship for this Sunday only. Since we are in such a fluid and new situation, the Session elected to take a cautious week-to-week approach with our Sunday church schedule. The Session will decide early next week whether to cancel future worship services and church activities. Once a decision has been made concerning future church activities and worship services, we will inform you as soon as possible.

Second, the Session is cancelling all church activities for the week of March 22-28, 2020. This includes, the Ecumenical Lenten Worship and Lunch, After School, Children's Choir, Adult Choir, and any church activity scheduled for next week.

Third, the Session is implementing a multi-layered communication strategy to help us stay connected to each other during this time of social distancing. A brief separation from each other does not mean that we stop relating with one another. We will be communicating general information about church activities and worship using email, the church website, Facebook, and a new "Call-em All" phone system. The "Call-em All" phone system is not operational yet, but it is in process. We will be using these tools to get information to you efficiently and effectively. We will also be using a person-to-person phone tree to stay in contact with each other. Consequently, we need volunteers who would be willing to make regular "phone tree" calls to check on the needs and well being of the members of our church family. If you would be interested in volunteering to make person-to-person phone tree calls, please be in touch with Teddy Bundy, the team leader for Congregational Care, so that she may assign to you five to ten church members to be in regular care and communication.

Both the Congregational Care Team and I want to minister to any needs that you may have during this time of social distancing. Please be aware that I will be keeping regular office hours next week, and I will be on call to meet your pastoral care needs. Please do not hesitate to call upon me.

Fourth, the Session is also initiating a quarantine care and response protocol. While there are no confirmed COVID-19 cases in our area, and we continue to pray that will be the case, we want to be proactive by putting ministries in place to help those who may become infected with the virus. Therefore,

we are looking for volunteers who are willing to deliver essentials—groceries, medications, etc.—to our members and to others in our community who may be quarantined or homebound. We are looking to put together five (5) – two (2) persons teams who would be willing to deliver essential items that are needed to those without a support system. Person-to-person contact would not be necessary as items could be left on the front porch or at an agreed upon location. If you are interested in helping with this ministry opportunity, please contact Angie Haynes or Richie Hooker, the team leaders for Service and Outreach.

Knowing that the coronavirus is having a negative economic effect on many of our neighbors, Session has asked the Service and Outreach Team to expand the awareness of our congregation's Blessing Box to the community and to reach out to Ecumenical Faith In Action to see what further assistance we may give as it provides essential services to the most economically vulnerable citizens of our community. Additionally, if you become aware of any critical needs in our community, please let the Service and Outreach Team and me know so that we may respond appropriately.

Fifth, the Session is initiating a new way that you may contribute financially to the church. With the awareness that church activities and worship may be closed or suspend for some time, the Session authorized the creation of an on-line giving option so that you may continue to support the church's ministries and mission. We hope to have the on-line giving feature operational on our website soon. In the meantime, however, you may mail your financial contribution directly to the church.

Lastly, the Session is assuring that our church building is clean and safe. Our janitorial staff is diligently working to ensure that the building is not only clean but disinfected. Please be reassured that we are taking appropriate precautions so that you may feel safe while accessing the church grounds.

I know this is an uncertain and unsettling time for all of us. And as I said in my letter to you yesterday, this is a very fluid moment and for a while we will be learning as we go. We are living in a new shared reality. We, however, will get through it. We will get through it together with grace and patience. We will discover a new normal. We will be together in church again.

Therefore, I view this as a moment of hope and not despair. I see this as a time of blessing and not a curse. I perceive this moment as an opportunity and not a crisis. I view this as a great opportunity to be a powerful expression of God's love and presence in the world. As I said yesterday, I believe the people of Jesus are built for moments like this one. And I know that we will rise-up to meet the great challenge and opportunity that is before us, because we travel in the wake of Jesus who summons us to take up our cross and to follow him.

With every good wish for you in these challenging and opportunistic days,

Rev. Kevin M. Campbell  
Interim-Transitional Pastor