

Dear Central,

A week ago when we sent our regular Friday pastors' email, Pastor Jenny and I could never have imagined what this week would bring. What began with a few modifications for germ awareness to our worship service, is now culminating with disruptions and inconveniences to our everyday lives. We've learned new vocabulary and phrases--social distancing, coronavirus, and flatten the curve. Much of our week was spent in meetings and briefings creating pandemic action plans and listening to guidance from the Chester County Health Department. We also have had conversations with our colleagues about best practices and ways to respond in faith for the health and safety of our congregations.

This is new for all of us. We're confident in the plan we put in place on Monday. But even more so, we're confident in the God who holds us close in our anxiety and uncertainty. In Christ, we trust that we are never alone. We are an Easter people, a people who believe that love conquers fear, and ultimately even death. We will get through this together. Even if together looks different than it has in the past.

As of today, Friday, March 13, we have increased Central's pandemic response to **Level 4: Closing. This means our building will be closed for at least two weeks, including Sunday worship services and our Kids Central Preschool.** Currently, this decision includes Sundays March 15 and 22. We will reevaluate at the beginning of the week of March 23 and let you know of plans going forward. Staff will work from home as they can, and ministry leaders will use technology where we are able to keep connected.

Deciding to close our building to ministry activity is not a decision we made lightly. Yet, we believe that doing so is the best way we can show love to our neighbors and to ourselves by truly practicing the social distancing that helps prevent the spread of Covid-19. It's the way that we care for the most medically vulnerable among us, and for those who are caring for the sick in doctors' offices and hospitals.

By Sunday morning you will be receiving communication from us again about ways you can worship at home this week. Next week we hope to deepen our worship experience together via technology. We will in touch with ways we can continue to be Christ's community even as we are apart. There are countless ways we can still be church together. More than ever, this is the time the church gets to shine Christ's light in the world.

150 years ago, Robert Lowery wrote these words to a much beloved hymn:

My life flows on in endless song, above earth's lamentation.

I hear the real though far-off hymn that hails a new creation.

No storm can shake my inmost calm while to that Rock I'm clinging.

Since Christ is Lord of heaven and earth, how can I keep from singing?

Keep singing, Central.

-Pastor Emily