

The First Presbyterian Church

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March 13, 2020

Dear Friends and Family of First Presbyterian Church of Mount Joy,

Recently the church session met and we wanted to communicate with you our concern about COVID-19 (Coronavirus) and what we are doing to meet the challenges of this illness. COVID-19 is a virus that causes a flu-like illness in people. Most people will have a mild illness, but those who are older or have underlying health conditions and/or weakened immune systems have a higher risk of serious illness. There is no vaccine for COVID-19. In light of this, session has decided to take the following actions and make the following requests:

- We love you, but if you are sick we ask you to stay home from worship.
- If you are immunosuppressed or have other serious health conditions, consider if attending worship is the right choice for you. We cannot make this decision for you.
- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and water. Additionally, there are some bottles of hand sanitizer located throughout the church. Soap and water are really your best option, though. Sing happy birthday to yourself twice as you scrub and make sure to cover all the areas that often get overlooked, like between the fingers and under the nails.
- Practice social distancing: We are not shaking hands or hugging during the passing of the peace. Consider refraining from this kind of contact at other times, also. Waving, smiles, and foot taps are all possible alternatives. Sit 5 feet apart from one another and alternate pews. Touch surfaces and your face as little as possible. Consider conducting church business over the phone or over the internet rather than in person.
- Home Worshipers: Please call, email or text, rather than visit in person, those who cannot make it to worship regularly. You can transmit the virus without having symptoms.
- Communion and the offering will be different: Ushers will wear gloves and carry the offering plate to you. Communion will still be done by distribution and continue to be prepared by those who wear gloves. Rather than pass the communion trays, the servers will bring the tray to you and use gloved hands to place the bread and cup into your hands.
- Session is continuing to monitor the news and make decisions about church activities. It may be necessary to cancel church services due to everyone's safety. In the event that Donegal School District and/or the Elizabethtown Area School district cancel classes due to COVID-19, session will decide to cancel church services.

- The process for canceling worship will look like what happens when we cancel due to weather. We will make a great effort to make a decision by 8 AM the day of worship and the news will come via email list and our robo-call list. Please be vigilant and please understand if a decision needs to be made after 8 AM. You may also wish to have your contact information updated with the church office.
- Even if we don't have church, church expenses still happen. Please consider giving your regular offering even if there is no worship on a particular Sunday. You can always mail a check or use your online banking to mail one for you. In the near future, we will consider what kinds of distance worship opportunities we might make available.
- Please pray and rest assured in a God who has our back no matter what; even in the most discouraging of circumstances, we do not walk alone. Pray for those who are sick and those who work in medicine and all types of caregiving. This is a challenging time.
- And to quote a Donegal Presbytery pastor: know that God is not afraid of COVID-19. There is no reason to panic, but rather it is best to put our energy into being prepared. And nothing in all of creation can separate us from the love of our God.
From Romans 8.

With hope in a risen Christ,

The Rev. Sarah A. Kneier, Pastor
First Presbyterian Church of Mount Joy