

Dear OPC,

Fred Rogers once described his work in children's television as "an expression of care." I like that phrase, and have begun to assess my efforts and those of the session by this standard: Do our actions yield expressions of care? Many of us understand that what is caring is often not what is easy, but that acting in caring ways is always what is right.

By now, you are likely aware of the spread of Covid-19, and the impact it may have on our community. As of the writing of this letter there are currently no confirmed cases within Chester County. Still, we think it imperative to be prepared, and even now to take precautions to promote the safety and wellness of our congregation and community.

The session discussed this matter at length at its last stated meeting on March 8 and in the days since. Given what we have learned about the transmission of this virus, the session has decided to implement some changes to our gathering times with a mind toward reducing risk:

- **If you are sick or symptomatic (with any illness) we lovingly ask you to refrain from coming to church at this time.** This is not meant to exclude you from fellowship, but rather to ensure a veil of protection for you and others.
- **We are requesting that all congregants refrain from physical contact during times of greeting.** This would include handshakes, hugs, and fist and elbow bumps. Instead, we encourage warm smiles, eye contact, affirmative nods, and kind words.
- **Until further notice we will not be passing the peace during our worship services.** Instead, after the traditional call and response, the congregation will be invited to sit.
- **We will refrain from passing the offering plates and pew registers for the time being.** Instead, those who wish to make an offering may do so by dropping their gift in the plates, which will be stationed on the sides of the sanctuary. We will also make available contact cards in the pews. These will mirror the pew registers and can be dropped in the offering plates. The offering will be brought forward at the usual time, accompanied by the singing of the doxology.
- **Bulletins will be available at the entry to the sanctuary.**
- **We are committing to additional cleaning routines during times of high traffic in our facility.** This will include increased attention being paid to the Sunday school and nursery, door handles/panels, elevator buttons, tabletops and counters, railings, and faucets.
- **We are asking that everyone be diligent in washing their hands regularly and thoroughly.** This means a twenty second scrub with soap, on the front and back of the hands, between the fingers, and under the nails. It also means turning off the water and opening the door to exit the restroom with a paper towel.

- **We will be postponing the celebration of the Lord's Supper on Palm Sunday, and are making a plan for its celebration on Easter Sunday.** We will have additional updates as our plans develop.
- **We will be adjusting our service during coffee hour.** Volunteers will serve you your choice of beverage. Individual serving creamers and sweeteners will be available. All food items that are served will be individually pre-packaged and factory sealed.
- **At present, Lenten lunches and community meals will continue as scheduled.** Our licensed food handlers will continue to display the same care for safety and sanitation that they already do. Hand Sanitizer and a sign asking people to use it will be positioned at the entryway. We will reassess this as the situation develops and make changes to our schedule accordingly.

These decisions were made based on recommendations of the Center for Disease Control, the Chester County Health Department, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, and the practice of fellow PC(USA) churches in the region. The session will continue to monitor this situation and is exploring contingency plans in the event that we would have to cancel services, or otherwise adjust our programming. At present, our office hours and worship times will remain unchanged.

In the midst of this anxious and uncertain time there are a few key things you can do to care for the people and ministry of Oxford Presbyterian Church:

- **Let the office know if you won't be coming to worship.** We want to do our best to keep you informed and engaged, even amid your absence.
- **Make sure your contact information is up to date.** This would include name, address, home and cell phone, email, and an emergency contact. Please contact the office to confirm your contact info is up to date in our system.
- **Bring hand sanitizer.** We have limited amounts of hand sanitizer throughout the building. If you have a small bottle you can bring for personal use, this would be appreciated.
- **Volunteer to make phone calls to those unable to attend worship.** If you are interested in this possibility, please reach out to the office so Pastor Scott can be in touch.
- **Consider giving online or by setting up an electronic funds transfer through your bank.** You can sign up for online giving through visiting our webpage www.oxfordpresbyterian.org, and clicking on "online giving" to the right of the calendar. Alternatively, you can contact your bank to set up an Electronics Fund Transfer. In the midst of an uncertain time your regular and continued support can help us to minister faithfully and effectively.

I know this might all seem excessive, but with so much uncertainty surrounding this virus we believe it is better to play it safe. And while it might sound ironic to say this after everything mentioned above, "please do not panic." There is a difference between panic and preparedness. If you have questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to me.

Finally, please pray. Pray for those who have fallen ill, the families of those who have died, for care providers, and those working on a treatment. Pray for those who do not have access to adequate healthcare. Pray for God's action in halting the continued spread of this pathogen. And pray for OPC, that we might continue to glorify God, even in the midst of uncertain times. As Paul wrote to the Philippians, "Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Faithfully,

Scott