

03/14/2020

Dear Simply Grace Community,

I have written this letter many times as I continued to watch events unfold around COVID-19. As of this morning (3/14/2020):

- Governor Murphy has declared a State of Emergency and a Public Health Emergency
- The Hunterdon County School System has closed all schools until at least 3/27/2020.
- Neither Hunterdon or Warren counties have positive cases of COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

I invite each of you to remain informed about what's happening from a trusted resource. To get updated developments as they happen, please consult the following sites:

- Specific to our county: Hunterdon County Dept of Health COVID website: <http://www.co.hunterdon.nj.us/health.html>
- Info through Hunterdon Health Care (Medical Ctr, etc): <https://www.hunterdonhealthcare.org/>
- CDC Website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

Our conference, Greater New Jersey, has created a resource page:

<https://www.gnjumc.org/disasterresponse/coronavirus-information/> that has information and links to other sites as well. Please know, the safety of every person within and beyond our church community is our primary concern and highest priority.

Here are some of the ways we are seeking to address the physical and spiritual needs of our community at this time:

Worship and Small Groups:

- We are currently NOT canceling this Sunday's worship (3/15/2020) but will cancel next Sunday (3/22/2020).
 - If you choose to attend worship in person, please thoroughly wash your hands when possible, and use hand sanitizer regularly. Do not cough or sneeze without shielding your mouth. Instead of shaking hands, please greet others with warm words and a friendly wave.
 - We will not be passing the offering plate, rather we will have plates available at the front and back of the sanctuary for people to put their offering in. Please consider giving online through our paypal link found [here](#) and on our website. Your continued giving plays a vital role in helping us keep our ministry and mission financial commitments during this uncertain time.
- We ARE canceling all small groups (**Women's Group, Choir and Thursday Bible Study**) for this week (3/15-3/20)
- Our Midweek Lenten Service will meet online (facebook with a link on our website) at 6pm on 3/18/2020.
- All events for Holy Week and Easter are still planned to happen, but are subject to change, depending on how the public health issues change. We will keep you posted on each of these events.

Building Use

- Currently, all of our partner groups (AA/ACA) are still welcome to use our building for events under 250 in attendance at their discretion. Each of these groups will make and communicate their own decisions about cancellations or continued meeting schedules.
- Our trustees are currently creating a plan to keep spaces clean, sanitized, and hospitable for all who use it.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to the church office, church@simplygraceumc.com. If there is a pastoral emergency, or if you would like someone to pray with you on the phone, or check in on a loved one, please feel free to contact me directly, pastor@simplygraceumc.com. Our leadership team will all be working together to address pastoral concerns and needs at this time.

We will do our best to leverage the use of technology (our website, Instagram, and Facebook page) to keep people connected to spiritual community for worship, meetings, and small groups. Please consider switching to online giving, or even giving more to help cover increased costs. Make sure you are washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20seconds (about the length it takes to say the Lord's Prayer).

I am so grateful for each of you and the ways you help us continue in ministry and mission on the corner of Church and Main, and beyond. I share with you this prayer written by Cameron Wiggins Bellm that has been shared among various clergy groups and continues to bring me peace amid the chaos;

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 and making their 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 our 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 this time when we cannot physically wrap our arms around each other. Let us find ways to be the loving embrace of God to our neighbors. Amen.

Beloved, let us live with love.

We will continue to send updates through email and social media as information changes.

With Gods Shalom,

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