

March 17, 2020 - Tuesday

A Word from our Pastor - COVID-19 Update

Beloved in Christ, the situation regarding the spread of COVID-19 virus is continuing to develop as is the response of our community. As followers of Jesus, we have committed to love God with all our hearts and love our neighbor as ourselves. As United Methodists, the general rules of our church are to do no harm, to do good, and to stay in love with God. We are called to do all of these things especially in these unusual days. And we do these things not in a spirit of fear, but out of deep love for one another. In an email this morning our Bishop, R. Lawson Bryan, advised churches to follow the lead of our local officials. You can read his email and others from earlier in the week here: [Bishop's email](#). (This link also includes helpful information regarding steps to keep everyone healthy, links to CDC and other sources of information.)

As a church, we have two factors to consider in determining our actions. First, we consider the health and welfare of our church family. We do have members who are more vulnerable to illness than others. All of our routine practices should always consider them. Secondly, we, as the church, are a community partner. Participating in the community for the good of everyone is how we love our neighbors. We could increase our hygiene practices, encourage our most vulnerable to stay home, and continue to operate as normal. However, others in our community are making deep sacrifices in order to encourage people not to congregate together. For us to continue our operations, would undermine this effort and negate those sacrifices. In light of the closure of Decatur County Schools and Grace Christian Academy and in consultation with church leadership and staff, **we have made the difficult decision to suspend all in person church activities through March 28**. Additionally, I will not be visiting anyone in person during this time. But I am delighted to talk and pray with you over the phone.

While we are not meeting together physically, your church is not closed. The staff is working today and tomorrow to produce a video worship experience that will be sent to members and friends on Sunday morning. We are also looking at ways we can show love and care for one another in these two weeks. Additionally, we are reaching out to see if we can assist with a few anticipated community needs. If we are able to help, we will need small numbers of volunteers at various times. These needs will be communicated in a separate email in the next few days. The church office will remain open to take your phone calls, to help you care for one another, and to see how we can meet community needs. Our food bank will continue to operate and is looking at how we can expand our services. As we look to how we continue to be the church, we are also dependent on your gifts. You are encouraged to make your gifts online during this time at Bainbridgefirstumc.org and click the green "GIVE" button or by mail at P. O. Box 541 Bainbridge, GA 39818. We will also let you know how you can give to support community outreach efforts.

Know in these days that you are not alone. Our prayers are with you. We are here to help. The church is not a building. We are the body of Christ when we are gathered even when we are scattered. We now have the opportunity to learn how to practice our faith and to love one another in new and creative ways.

Grace and peace,

Pastor Melissa