

Franklin United Methodist Church

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Greetings Family of Faith. I have information that I want to share with you related to our journey with the COVID-19 virus. The information comes from a variety of sources. Our Bishop, Rev. Scott Jones, Governor Greg Abbott, Robertson County Sheriff's office and our District office.

Since the last letter I put out we have seen the Covid-19 virus come closer to home, with our own Edwin and Peggy Cooper directly infected. And sadly, while both seem to recover, Edwin passed away. We grieve with the family even while we celebrate his resurrection and first breaths in the eternal presence of his Heavenly Father. This morning, my brother-in-law James Standing, advised that he has tested positive for the Covid-19 virus and is in isolation in the basement of his Saint Louis home.

I know that some of our members have lost friends who live in other states. And we are beginning to see the economical impact with individuals who have lost their jobs. And there are other stories of which I am not yet aware. For this reason, I believe our actions during this time are just as important as they were in the first few weeks of this pandemic. We must, as our Bishop stated, "do no harm." To that purpose we have been asked to continue online worship through May and possibly June. So, for now we will continue with the online worship and I thank you for your willingness to embrace this form of worship. I will meet with the worship committee to begin the process of creating protocol for the return of worship in our sanctuary.

Let me share with you some of the factors that we must consider in this process.

- We can start thinking about meeting in groups of 10 or less. In some cases, slightly larger groups might be acceptable in those counties where the impact is limited to just a few cases or none at all. We have not had much testing in our area so the small numbers of cases will have to be measured against the limited testing.
- All sources are still recommending that individuals who are 60 or older are most at risk and should stay home for the foreseeable future.
- Screening of employees and volunteers will be required, complete with temperatures being taken.
- Social distancing in the church will be required. Elimination of every other row and two to three seats in between persons not of the same household.

- A plan for disinfecting after each space is used will need to be developed and implemented, including disinfecting seats following services.
- Wearing masks in gatherings will be required for the protection of ourselves and others. Currently we are having masks made in preparation for the need.
- Some of the recommendations suggest taking temperatures at the door before allowing entrance to the facility.
- Those serving as ushers and greeters will be required to wear gloves.
- Sanitizing stations will be set up at the doors and will need to be used by all individuals prior to entrance into the facility.
- Childcare will not be able to resume until all CDC guidelines can be strictly enforced.

Word has already been received that our Annual Conference that was scheduled for the last week in May has been cancelled. It has tentatively been rescheduled for August 14 & 15, 2020. But we are advised that this too may need to be cancelled depending on the situation at the time.

I am so proud of the many ways you are helping to protect our community. And pray for your safety and wellbeing. I encourage you to continue with your prayers. Please include those who deal with mental illness on a daily basis and who may be experiencing heightened anxiety and fear during this time.

We, as a church, have made the decision to continue to pay our employees. A big thank you to the finance team who have secured financial assistance that made this an easier task. I also want to thank each of you for your faithful, thoughtful and prayerful continuation of your offering to the church. They are greatly appreciated and certainly not taken for granted during this difficult time.

If you have concerns, prayer requests, and special needs please feel free to contact the church office and relay that information. Frances is working in the office 3 days a week for now and will get that information to me. If you wish to talk directly to me you can reach me by cell phone at 281-733-0978 or you may call my new landline 979-828-4423.

With great love and assurance that we will meet in worship together again I pray that God bless you and keep you in Christ's light.



Rev. Polly D. Standing,
Senior Pastor

