



Covenant United Methodist Church

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“Be still and know that I am God” Psalm 46:10

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Under guidance from Governor Larry Hogan and our Bishop Latrelle Miller Easterling, we will be closing our building to all activities beginning Saturday, March 14 and continuing through Friday, March 27 at least. We are notifying those who use our building of this circumstance. We'll be having a deep cleaning performed during the time we are away. We are working plans for how to bring you some form of worship, study, and community. We will be monitoring guidance from church and government leaders to determine when we can safely resume activities.

What a swirling, chaotic moment we are living in, full of uncertainty and hazard. Throughout the ages when God's people have faced challenges, we become full of fear. We hoard to ensure we have what we need. Like the children of Israel who wandered in the desert, we forget the that source of our hope and our salvation is God and community. This moment is no different. Our hope is in God and community. Without a doubt, we are being forced to redefine the shape of life for our community. We must find new creative ways to stay in contact with one another. We must find new creative ways to share worship and study and prayer. We must find new creative ways to see our neighbor and lighten their load. Yet, I believe that in the midst of the chaos, God is with us and is calling us ever more into love.

While we hope that we will soon resume normal activities, the church, like you, will face economic impacts from this. Fortunately, we are on sound financial footing and will be managing our bills as best we can. I would like to encourage you to continue your normal giving, to the extent you are able. If you give electronically, those payments will continue. You may make additional one-time donations through online banking, by mail or by clicking on the “Donate Here” button on the church website to donate through Paypal. If you would normally make your contribution in person on Sundays, we encourage you to use one of these methods instead.

I will put out information tomorrow about alternative worship. In the days to come, we will be offering information on ways to study and be in community. All information will be posted on the website (<http://www.covenant-umc.org/>), distributed in our Covenant Connection e-mail, and on the church Facebook page. We are also creating a phone tree for those who aren't connected digitally. If you know of someone who needs to be on the tree, e-mail me at dawn.stewart@covenant-umc.org. If you need to contact me, please feel free to call 301-848-2265. If I don't answer leave a message, and I'll get back to you.

There are blessings that come from stopping, from Sabbath. I was moved by this poem by Rev. Lynn Unger about the place we are in this moment. I commend it to your prayer and consideration.

Pandemic
by Rev. Lynn Unger

What if you thought of it
as the Jews consider the Sabbath—
the most sacred of times?
Cease from travel.
Cease from buying and selling.
Give up, just for now,
on trying to make the world
different than it is.
Sing. Pray. Touch only those
to whom you commit your life.
Center down.

And when your body has become still,
reach out with your heart.
Know that we are connected
in ways that are terrifying and beautiful.
(You could hardly deny it now.)
Know that our lives
are in one another's hands.
(Surely, that has come clear.)
Do not reach out your hands.
Reach out your heart.
Reach out your words.
Reach out all the tendrils
of compassion that move, invisibly,
where we cannot touch.

Promise this world your love--
for better or for worse,
in sickness and in health,
so long as we all shall live.

May we all find new ways to grow closer to God, new ways to extend love to one another, and new life in Christ in this difficult moment.

With faith, hope, and love,

Pastor Dawn