

Hi Friends,

I'm sorry for the length of this email, but I wanted to provide an update for you all about how we continue to be a church together when we need to be separate from each other, and there is a lot to cover.

Obviously, a lot has changed in how we operate around here. The biggest change for us in our everyday rhythms of the church is that we have extended the time period in which we will refrain from meeting in person at the church building until April 30th. With the advice of local health officials and our Bishop's office this seems to be the best and most prudent course for us. One of our biggest directives we have is to "do no harm." The threat of being a place that puts people at risk for contracting COVID 19 is just too great. The leadership team and I at the church have been working with an Emergency plan for the last three weeks and will continue to operate this way until life returns to some normalcy. The protocols help us continue to help us do and address the things that are vitally important for our church in some capacity. Things like Worship, Service, Spiritual Growth and Friendships/Relationships. Let me go through the list to get you up to date on where we are in each of these areas.

WORSHIP: Since we received the recommendation to not hold public worship three weeks ago, we have quickly adapted to doing an online only worship gathering each Sunday. Each week it has changed in format, as the landscape has changed with new information and new recommendations. Because we are obeying the stay at home order, we won't be doing the live stream format we have used the last two weeks. Until we are able to meet together in groups of 10 or less, we will be putting together a "production video", in which we compile different parts of worship in our own homes and bring them together for a video that will be posted on our YouTube channel Sunday at 10:30 am. You can connect to that video in a number of ways. 1) You can follow this link - <https://www.youtube.com/user/PiratesoftheColumbia> - and go straight to our YouTube page and click the video. 2) You can go to our church web page (www.KennewickFirst.com) and click the "sermons" button at the top of the page and it will take you to our YouTube page – or – 3) If you are on Facebook, there will be a link posted on our Kennewick First United Methodist Church's Facebook page that will take you to the YouTube page. Finally, our hope is that the worship experience online will be more than a static "watch church on TV" experience. If you click the "news" button on the church's web page you will find an order of worship and lyrics to the songs, we will sing during worship so you can participate more actively in the service.

SERVICE: Being in service to others is increasingly hard when we are not able to be in contact face-to-face with one another. With that being said, we are doing our best to help people in our community as best we can. Our Thursday night Soul Soup program is continuing in the understanding that serving food is an essential program for our community. The number of volunteers has been drastically reduced and they are following STRICT sanitation and health guidelines. Rather than participants coming in and having a sit-down meal together, Soul Soup is providing meals in a "Sack Lunch" format. The number of people using this service is steadily increasing as the present limitations have been in place. Our other service programs are on pause until at least April 30th.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH: ALL our groups that meet at the church are suspended until April 30th. That means that our Youth Groups, Sunday School classes and mid-week groups are all suspended. Some of our classes have begun to meet via a video conference platform the church

uses called Zoom. Our Sunday School program has delivered Activity/curriculum Bags for our younger kids to do Sunday School lessons at home. Contact your group leader if you have questions about your group meeting via a video conference.

FRIENDSHIP: For most of us one of the greatest benefits of the church is the connection we share with each other when we participate in the events and programs the church offers. At its heart Church is a community of people. One of our highest priorities has been to keep people connected to one another in a time that we have to be isolated. Our Lay Shepherds and other volunteers have been burning up the phone lines in the last two weeks, making contact with folks to check in on them, and keep the bond between all of us as a church healthy and strong. But I want to remind you that even if you are not a volunteer Lay Shepherd, we can all make the extra effort to reach out and communicate with one another. Remember the phone works two ways... You can receive calls... but you can make them as well. And just a reminder I've directed Cynthia Bement and the Lay Shepherds not to do any in home visits. In an extremely unique or severe situation in which either I or Cynthia need to be in someone's home we will have to follow protocols of masks, gloves and no physical contact.

The last thing I want to remind you of is the financial impact the "Stay at home" order has on our church. Many of us have made prayerful and intentional commitments to support the work we feel God has called us to be a part of at KFUMC. Most of us put a check in the offering plate on Sunday morning to fulfill that commitment. I want to remind you that when we are not in person with each other, we can still fulfill that commitment. The easiest way is to simply put the check in an envelope and mail it to the church, rather than put it in the offering plate. Or if you are like me, you can take advantage of your online banking features at whatever bank you do business with. I simply have my bank send a check automatically on the 1st and 15th of each month with my tithing check. Or, if you like, you can take advantage of our church's Push Pay account. On the church's webpage at the top right corner there is a "Give" button. That button will take you to a secure and encrypted server that allows you to make an online donation. You can either make a one-time gift, or you can set it up to make a recurring gift on a repeating cycle you set. Finally, we have an opportunity to give via a text message through the same Push Pay service. Simply text: KENNEWICKFIRST to 77977 and you will receive a prompt on your phone to donate.

Things are moving and changing day by day, sometimes hour by hour, but I want to continue to hold before us that the reason why we are here is because we believe everyone is a beloved child of God. That all of us can experience God's Spirit, and that Jesus invites us to be part of a spirit-filled community. We are using our time, our talents, and our treasure to create a world that reflects the Justice, Reign and Grace of God!

Stay safe, stay healthy and... WASH YOUR HANDS!

Pastor Mark