

Dear Friends,

This past week certainly had its share of nervous energy with the World Health Organization's announcement of a pandemic. People are concerned, as they should be. Should you be concerned enough to want to refrain from attending any activity at Sunset Hills United Presbyterian Church (or any other large gathering), please don't give it a second thought. *Take care of your health while not allowing fear to ruin your day to day life!*

Your church is practicing an overabundance of caution by instilling the follow precautions in response to this pandemic. These precautions are based on the recommendations of the Center for Disease Control and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Preventative Measures

1. We are eliminating food being served during Fellowship Hour through the month of March and April, or until the pandemic has passed.
2. We are canceling the meal portion of the remaining Dinners with a Purpose and the dinner portion of the upcoming Maundy Thursday observances.
3. We are canceling the dinner portion of the 20-30 Something's Dinner on March 29.
4. We are suspending the sacrament of communion in the month of April.
5. We are suspending the Passing of the Peace through the month of April.
6. The offering is being collected at tables located in the back of the church as individuals are leaving the church. The ushers will stand by those tables and carry the plates to the counting room per normal following worship.
7. Pastoral care home and shut-in visits are limited to emergency and hospital visitations.
8. Those who are feeling unwell, or who feel uncomfortable being in large gatherings, are encouraged to refrain from attending church events.

Proactive Measures

1. Worship services will be filmed beginning this Sunday, and will be posted on YouTube and Facebook.
2. I will provide pastoral care via phone calls, Facetime, and Skype.
3. I will provide liturgical and Scriptural resources for individuals to celebrate communion around the table in your own homes.

4. Should the church go into quarantine; Barb Clark and I will provide live Bible studies via Facebook Live and/or Zoom.
5. All church members are encouraged to please call the church office if diagnosed with COVID-19.
6. If any church member is experiencing hardship because of local measures related to this virus, such as needing transportation to doctors' appointments, needing assistance with food, etc., they are asked to please contact the church office. We want to make sure that our church family is cared for and their needs are met through the time of this pandemic.

Theological Reflection

The Hebrew word for "fear" is yare. The ancient Hebrews were an intelligent people and they faced life threatening situations every day ranging from illness to starvation to war to wild animals. Their word for fear has not ONE meaning but many. The word for fear, yare, means fear but it also means "reverence" or "awe" or "respect". When we speak of the "fear of the Lord" it also means reverence, awe and respect.

As we confront this virus, please think of the Hebrew word, yare. A LITTLE fear can be good as it warns us of danger...I still am afraid if I stand too close to a highway! But there is more, may we have respect for this virus. All that means is, we still need to go on with life and rejoice each and every day, for God has made this day. But at the same time, we need to respect the threat the illness presents. Neither over-reacting nor under-reacting but keeping an appropriate balance. As your pastor, I have grown to love and care for all of you, and your health (physical and spiritual) is paramount to me. Please take appropriate actions but also know that God is with us...and let not your hearts be troubled!

In Christ's Service,
Pastor Laura