

Good afternoon Lockport,

These past few days have been an absolute whirlwind. Who would have thought 48 hours ago that we would be canceling church for the next few weeks and that schools would be shut down across the state? Who would have thought part of my job the past couple days is to tune into Governor Mike DeWine's daily press conferences regarding the coronavirus? Everything about the virus and about the situation seems to change daily and so we as church leaders will continue to monitor the situation and keep you as updated as possible.

The church is closed this Sunday, March 15 and next Sunday, March 22. As of right now the plan is to cancel any church events that are scheduled in the week after a Sunday service is closed. That means right now, we will not have church sponsored events through Saturday, March 28. Leadership Team will monitor the news and recommendations that we receive and will reevaluate the situation on a regular basis.

Here are a couple ways we are planning to move forward in over the next few weeks. Again this is subject to change as more information becomes available.

First: Please stay healthy as best as you can. From what has been reported this virus most significantly impacts older adults and those with preexisting conditions. Although, children and younger healthy adults seem fairly immune to the symptoms they are carriers of the virus and can easily spread the virus to the more susceptible in our midst.

If you do come down with coronavirus please let the church know so we can help take care of you and your family through prayers, meals, encouragement and other tangible ways. We are the body of Christ together and the beautiful thing about Jesus is that as God made flesh he entered into the messiness of humanity, sickness and disease and all. We as a church will not shrink back in fear in regards to coronavirus but we will care for one another and care for our community.

Second: If any pastoral concerns or prayer requests arise please contact the church. Without a weekly gathering for the next few weeks we will make more use of our phone tree, email, and text alert system to keep you updated and informed on how we can pray for each other.

Third: I am exploring working on a devotional that will be sent out through email, and potentially recorded and given on the website. As of right now I'm thinking this would be about three times a week. For those who don't have easy access to the internet, or email we will work up some form of written devotional that we can distribute. This is where we need your help. If you know of people who fall in this

category please contact the church office so we can make sure no one falls through the cracks.

Fourth: We will release some form of sermon and prayer time each Sunday that we are closed online. This will most likely be through the website.

Fifth: Continue to check back on the website: lockportmennonite.com for updates and more information.

This list is not exhaustive, and I'm sure we as a leadership team have not thought about all the implications of how the coronavirus will impact our life together over the next few weeks. We will do our best, but know that none of us are experts at handling pandemic crises. If you have ideas about things we can do to support you, or to help the church body through the next few weeks please don't hesitate to let us know and we will add them to our discernment.

I leave you with a prayer from a resource about facing Potential Health Crises in the church. Please pray with me:

Holy God, we bring before you our concerns, fears, and confusion. We lay them before you and ask you to respond to our requests. We pray for courage to prepare in the face of misunderstanding by others; help us to be brave. We pray for wisdom and prudence in the way we prepare for crisis; give us common sense, focus and understanding among ourselves. We pray that our hearts will be willing to be faithful to your call; give us eyes to see, and ears to hear your will and direction. Finally, Holy God, we pray for those persons and communities who are at risk today; through your people, give them many signs of your love and hope. We pray all of these things in Jesus' holy name, you son and our savior, Amen.

Grace and Peace to you all. We'll gather again soon!

Pastor Matt on behalf of the Leadership Team