



St. Mark's United Church of Christ

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Rev. David A. Jones, Pastor

March 17th, 2020

My fellow Christians,

By now, I'm sure you've heard the recommendations and suggestions from the State of Pennsylvania and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to shut down "non-essential" businesses and organizations due to the Coronavirus Pandemic. While we don't *want* to hear the recommendation to shut down, I think we expected recommendations like these were coming sooner rather than later. While I believe the church is essential (especially in times of difficulty), for the health and safety of our members (and to do our part to slow down the spread of the virus), we have made the decision to suspend our public gatherings and in person worship services for at least the next two Sundays (March 22nd and March 29th).

Because we need God even more in challenging times, we will be using the gift of technology to give us the opportunity to gather together for prayer, to hear scriptures, and to receive words of hope until we are able to return to our sanctuary for our regular worship services.

In order to access these special services, there are two options. First, if you have access to Facebook (or know someone who does), you can watch a "live stream" of the service on St. Mark's Facebook page beginning at 9am on Sunday March 22nd and March 29th. If you do not have Facebook and you still wish to hear the Sunday service, we have an option for you. The steps are very easy to follow. Here is what you need to do:

The number to access the worship service is (215) 383-1625

When asked for the 6 digit conference code, enter: 569284 and the # sign

If you are asked for the host PIN number, just press *

When you are asked for your attendee PIN number, just press *

Please note: the number above is a long distance number (it is actually a Philadelphia number). For most of us (especially if we use cell phones), calling long distance numbers does not incur additional charges. However, if you do not have a long distance calling plan, please call Kathy Follett at (717) 272 – 7929. Kathy has

a toll free number you can use to access the service at no charge to you. One additional piece of advice, if you have the capability on your phone, it may be helpful to put your phone on "speakerphone" option to listen to the service.

After March 29th, we will reassess where we are with the pandemic and consider the recommendations of our federal, state, and local governments before making the decision to extend the suspension of our worship gatherings, or to resume worship services as normal. I don't want to put the cart before the horse, but if the suspension of our worship services extends beyond Easter, we will have a special celebration of Holy Week and the Resurrection once regular worship services resume. But let's cross those bridges when we get to them. Let's stay focused on the challenges of this day knowing that God is sharing this journey with us every step of the way.

I don't think I need to convince anyone that life will be different in the days and weeks ahead. But no matter what happens and no matter how many inconveniences we face, God is still God and God is in control. We will survive, we will endure, we will overcome, and we will make it together. As we adjust to how life is slowing down, we have a wonderful opportunity to refocus our lives and our attention on God. So while we may be inconvenienced for a time, if we take advantage of the opportunity to grow closer to God, then we will come through these challenging times stronger and better than we ever were before.

I hope to "see" some of you on Facebook Live and "hear" some of you over the phone on Sunday morning at 9am! Until then...

The Journey Continues...

Pastor Dave

P.S. While we are continuing to offer modified worship services to give us hope and to renew our faith in these challenging times, one thing that we cannot modify are the bills and expenses we face as a church. We will continue to have bills to pay, financial obligations to meet, and ministries to support. We have explored several options to make things easy for everyone to bring their offerings in; the easiest way will be to use the United States Postal Service and mail your offerings to us. We thank you for keeping the church in mind during these challenging times and we pray for God's blessing to be upon all of us in the days, weeks, and months ahead.