



March 22, 2020

Coronavirus Message from Conference Minister

Dear Friends,

The Covid-19 virus continues to alter radically our daily lives. I have been inspired by the ways that many of you are initiating creative and adaptive changes to meet these difficult days. Many congregations found ways yesterday to be at worship together while not meeting together. Several churches are re-examining online giving and other approaches to stewardship. And others are exploring ways to meet the needs of their local community for basic supplies including food, medication and dare I say it -- toilet paper. It was hard to miss the voice of the still speaking God in last week's lectionary epistle from Romans, "that suffering produces endurance and endurance produces character and character produces hope and hope does not disappoint us because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit".

The flow of information about the virus continues unabated. Two items that have been particularly helpful to me were an article from The Atlantic posing questions and answers about how to live by "social distancing" (<https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2020/03/coronavirus-what-does-social-distancing-mean/607927/>). The other was FAQ's page from the Montgomery County website where the Coronavirus seems to be the most prevalent in the state of Pennsylvania (<https://www.montcopa.org/3486/COVID-19-FAQs>). I am certain your home county has issued similar guidance. In the midst of all this information, let me affirm three things:

The reality of "social distancing" is something we must practice as a way to protect one another. To that end, our Conference staff began Monday working remotely (an unintended opportunity to practice a mobile office platform) and all Conference sponsored events are canceled until April 1 when we will re-evaluate the situation. Also, the CDC has offered new guidance that groups of 50 people or more should not meet for the next eight weeks.

Some of us will interpret that to mean that no group of any size should meet in the next eight weeks. Others of us may use that suggestion as freedom to continue regularly scheduled meetings. As I have said, in your discerning and deciding, make your first priority the safety and well-being of you and the people you are called to love and lead.

Second, as one of our Conference Pastor's reminded his congregation 1st Sunday, "social distancing" isn't the same thing as "spiritual distancing". 'We still have the opportunity to phone each other, check in on each other and our neighbors send a note or card and by keeping each other in our thoughts and prayers we can stay spiritually connected.'

Finally, there is nothing good about a virus that claims human life and wreaks havoc on communal living. That said, the onset of the virus in the season of Lent which has always been an invitation to take time to examine our Lives, to make changes and to move closer to the cross is cause in itself for contemplation. In this crisis, as in anytime of suffering, there is an opportunity for clarity about what matters most, deeper commitments to our Christian convictions and the practice of an "endurance which produces character and character produces hope and hope does not disappoint us because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit". The virus is not a gift. But our reactions to it can be.

As ever, you remain in my prayers,
Pastor Bill

Rev. William P. Worley, PSE Conference Minister



For the latest information the Conference has to share regarding the ongoing effects of the coronavirus, go to:

Psec.org/coronavirus