

Dear friends in Christ,

Over the last week, I have met with Session on a couple different occasions. During our meetings we have discussed how the church is going to respond to the Covid-19 (Coronavirus) and what we are going to do. We appreciate your patience as we work our way through what will be our temporary reality.

At this point in time, the church is closed to all nonessential activities including Wednesday Night dinners and the Leadership Summit. The church office is closed, but I will be working from home and can be reached by email and phone. The church is also temporarily postponing all in-person worship. We will have worship every Sunday morning at 10A.M., but we will be gathering online only. We have decided to take this measure based on two facts: (1) The Giddings Lovejoy Presbytery recommends all local worshipping bodies forego in-person worship service for now and, instead, meet online. (2) The CDC has made recommendations to the same effect. Thus, the decision has been made to postpone all in-person worship until further notice. Session and I will closely monitor the CDC, Madison County Health, and Giddings Lovejoy Presbytery for new or additional recommendations. When conditions change and it is safe and permissible we will resume in-person worship. We believe it is imperative at this time to trust and respect experts and leaders in this matter, especially those who are trained to deal with infectious diseases. We are and will continue to abide by their guidelines and recommendations.

During this time of adjustment, we recognize that there are those among us for whom these changes will be incredibly difficult. The church is a place of community, unity and peace. It is a place of refuge for the vulnerable, the tired, and the weak. It is also a place for the strong, the healthy, and the courageous. It is a group of people, who seek to follow Christ, and care for one another. Keeping everyone in mind, we do not want to put anyone at risk: strong or weak, healthy or sick. We pray you understand the decision to close the church to all nonessential functions and to postpone in-person worship will be received as means of hospitality, wisdom and prudence. To that end, we ask that you continue to pray for the church and its operations, so that one day soon we can all gather together in-person and glorify God. Even if we cannot meet in person, we are still the body of Christ, God's people, the church.

As information changes and updates are received the Session will regularly meet, via email, to make plans for the life of the church. As we make plans, we will share them with you. Updated information will be posted on social media (Facebooks & Instagram), as well as the church website. We will also be sending out emails and regular letters to communicate the latest happenings as we are so able to do.

If anyone is in need of pastoral care, if anyone is concerned, if anyone just needs to talk please email me (pastor@fupcoll.org). The Elders and Deacons are also happy to speak with you about these matters too.

We are praying for you all, and covet your prayers too. Session has worked diligently to provide for everyone and to cover all our bases. Please remember us in your prayers as you pray for the church, the community, and all of God's creation. Please call one another and show your care through the variety of ways we have to communicate with one another (phone, email, social media, email, snail mail, etc.).

Peace be with you,

Reverend Zachary T. Lysdahl
(03.16.2020)