

Hi friends,

I pray that you and your families are safe and healthy during this challenging time. I wanted to give you an update on what is going on...or not going on at KFUMC and where we are in this everchanging landscape of the Covid 19 situation. Last night, (Thursday) I met with the emergency team I've assembled, and we made some decisions and plans to help keep us as safe as possible in this situation.

We are operating on a system of understanding what activities and functions are "mission critical" (To use emergency management language) ... what things can we post pone... and what things do we cancel all together.

WORSHIP: First, our Governor has issued a proclamation (###) baring all gatherings of over 50 people until March 31st. That is longer than the time period our Bishop and cabinet had requested we hold off in-person worship services. Since our community is still on the "uphill side" of the infection rate and preparation curve for this pandemic, it is our assumption that the ban on public gatherings will be extended. With that in mind, we unanimously decided to extend the time period that we will not have in person worship until April 12th. Our plan is to re-initiate our worshipping together on Easter Sunday. It is VERY likely that date will be amended and pushed back, but until we get more solid information that is our plan. This is of course all dependent on updates and new information that is literally coming into us by the day.

CLASSES AND MEETINGS: Secondly, in general we follow our school district's plan for closures when snow and weather are involved. We do that because we know that they have a responsibility for keeping a large segment of our population safe. We will be following those same guidelines when it comes to our other classes and meetings at church. Since the schools at this point are closed until April 24th. We will also be not having any of our regular groups meet until **after April 24th**. That means no in person Sunday School classes, no in person Youth meetings, no in person Bible Studies, No UMW meetings... do you see a theme ☺ So if you have a group that you regularly participate in at the church building, know that it is not meeting until after April 24th. Again... say it with me... This is all dependent on updates and new information that is literally coming into us by the day

I want you to be aware that it is also imperative that our staff remain as safe as possible during this time. At this time hospitals, nursing homes and assisted living facilities have banned ALL visitors... that includes Clergy. There are hospital chaplains on duty during this time and they will be helping us fill that gap. Please be praying for them in this exhausting and emotional work! Cynthia Bement, our congregational care staff person, our Lay Shepherds and I will not be doing in home face to face visits during this time. If there is a need that is life and death, where either Cynthia or I need to be in a home, be aware that we will need to take precautions, like wearing a mask and gloves and avoiding any physical touch. That being said, Cynthia has done a spectacular job of making sure that people who are confined to their homes are being contacted and reminded that they are a beloved part of our church. THANK YOU, CYNTHIA,

Those are the most important changes that are happening in our day to day life as a church.

Here are the great new things we are doing to continue to be a church that celebrates and worships together, serves others and grows in our faith and builds meaningful friendships in a community of faith.

WORSHIP: This Sunday at 10:30 am, we will be live streaming our worship service via our YouTube channel. You can follow this link <https://www.youtube.com/user/PiratesoftheColumbia> *(yes the name is “pirates of the Columbia” but yes it’s really our KFUMC channel... Chuck Smith had the account for a band he had years ago and he donated his site to us because it allows us to live stream for more than 15 minutes at a time)* or we will have a link posted on our Face book page, or you can go to the Church web page and click on the “sermons” link at the top of the page and it will take you to our YouTube channel where you can view the live stream. Also, you can view all the previous sermons on that page as well. So, I hope you can join us at 10:30 am this Sunday via our YouTube Channel.

SUNDAY SCHOOL: Several groups have started to meet via video conference. This Sunday the Youth Group will be meeting for both Sunday School and Youth Group via a Zoom Conference. Rachel Loomis, our Youth Ministries Director, has sent out email links to join those Zoom Conferences. If you are a youth, or know a youth who did not get the link or hasn’t given Rachel their email, please send her/him an email note requesting it at Rachel@Kennewickfirst.com. Also, there are plans for putting together a Sunday school curriculum and activity bag for our younger Sunday School class participants, that will have materials for you to do a Sunday school lesson at home. Keep an eye out for how to receive that bag/kit in the very near future!

Finally, for those of us who use Facebook, I will be doing a brief live stream devotion every Thursday at 6 pm as a way to not only keep us up on information we need as a church but as a way to just have contact with you all. In the short time I have been your pastor, I have grown to love this congregation very much, and I miss not being able to be with you in person, and this will give me at least some contact with you all in a pastoral way.

That is all I can share with you at this point... WHEW! But please keep an eye out for emails, as all of these things “are all dependent on updates and new information that are literally coming into us by the day” ... I’m going to get that tattooed on me somewhere after this is all over...

Thanks, my friends! Be safe and be healthy!

Pastor Mark