



Valley Presbyterian Church

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The Reverend John Wahl, Pastor

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*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
(1 Corinthians 1:3)*

Sister and brothers in Christ,

It is my great privilege, as pastor of this congregation, to greet those who gather for worship each Sunday with these words from the Apostle Paul. I am, also, so proud of the ways that we discern and live out our calling as the people of God sent out to be agents of grace, hope and peace in our neighborhoods and beyond.

At this particular time, though, we need to re-think the ways that we are gathered and sent. For the sake of the common good and one another's well-being, we have been asked by government and public health officials to practice physical "social distancing", even as we imagine new practices that will create spiritual and emotional nearness.

These decisions are not easy and are disruptive – in at least some ways – to the lives of all of us. I appreciate the input and prayers of many of you who have contacted me or other leaders of the congregation about how we can best be church in this moment.

Given the situation as we understand it, we will not be holding in-person worship services for, at minimum, the next two Sundays: March 22 and 29. We are, also, cancelling the Lenten Soup Supper scheduled for Wednesday, March 25 and the Deacons' Brunch on March 29. Heart of Valley Preschool will remain closed at least through Monday, April 6.

This Sunday, we will be hosting a modified worship service at 10:30 a.m. via Facebook Live. John Kautzman will be present to play the organ, and I will be offering prayers, scripture and a sermon reflection. Tomorrow, we will send out an abbreviated worship bulletin that you can use from home at this or another time. The sermon text will be posted on the church website on Monday, as usual.

As a church, we, also, want to be attentive to the needs among our members and neighbors while they are being asked to stay home. Please contact the church office, if you have practical needs; and you can always contact Pastor John at 216-287-2405 for pastoral needs.

If you contribute financially to the church, please consider keeping up with this discipline as we seek to continue to fulfill obligations for staff, property and mission partners. All pledges and offerings can be mailed to the church office at the address above as we continue to discern how and where to direct our support in these changing circumstances.

Finally, please hold all of those who are particularly vulnerable at this time based on age, health condition or occupation in prayer. Let us trust that God will lead us even through this dark and uncertain valley, supporting each of us according to our need. A colleague sent along this prayer written to offer some perspective in these anxious times:

Prayer for a Pandemic
By Cameron Bell

*May we who are merely inconvenienced
Remember those whose lives are at stake.
May we who have no risk factors
Remember those most vulnerable.
May we who have the luxury of working from home
Remember those who must choose between preserving their health or making their rent.
May we who have the flexibility to care for our children when their schools close
Remember those who have no options.
May we who have to cancel our trips
Remember those that have no safe place to go.
May we who are losing our margin money in the tumult of the economic market
Remember those who have no margin at all.
May we who settle in for a quarantine at home
Remember those who have no home.
As fear grips our country, let us choose love.
During this time when we cannot physically wrap our arms around each other,
Let us yet find ways to be the loving embrace of God to our neighbors. Amen.*

In Peace,
Pastor John