



March 24, 2020

Dear Friends,

I hope this message finds you safe and healthy. It may also find you bored to tears or claustrophobic! Apologies if I am interrupting your binge watching of your favorite TV series.

I want to share with you some of the ministry and mission that continue despite sheltering in place. Thanks be to God that we live in a technologically advanced age when we can maintain our connections despite not being physically present with each other. That day will come, but for now, we improvise.

Our Session made three important decisions this week by email vote. In keeping with Governor Carney's State of Emergency Declaration, our building will not be open for public worship or meetings until after May 15, 2020, or until government health officials deem it safe. Our online worship services will continue until that time. If you have not watched either of our first two virtual worship services, I urge you to go the home page of our website and click on the link provided in the box entitled "Sunday Worship." We extend our heartfelt thanks to Jason Berger who provided music for Sunday's service. Also, we are indebted to Roger Reinicker for recording, editing, and converting the videotape into a YouTube video.

Second, our Session voted to postpone all memorial services until after the Coronavirus crisis has passed. In the meantime, if a member of our church family dies, one of our pastors may conduct an outside graveside or committal service if he/she is comfortable with the arrangements.

Third, I was scheduled to have a sabbatical this summer. The Coronavirus has created such uncertainty, that I cannot in good conscience leave on sabbatical. At my request, the members of Session have agreed to postpone my sabbatical until next year.

Our Deacons, Stephen Ministers, and our pastors are making phone calls to our members and having wonderful conversations. Our Director of Music/Organist Search Committee is continuing to work. Shortly before we stopped gathering in groups, our final candidate came to Westminster to play the organ and piano, and to rehearse our choir. Last Wednesday night we had a conference call which reduced our four candidates to two. We will meet via conference call tomorrow to hear from those who called references. We hope to make a decision soon.

Monday, we had our weekly staff meeting, only we held it by Zoom video conferencing rather than in person. It lasted more than two hours, but gave us the opportunity to discuss a number of issues that needed attention. The staff was delighted to see each other.

On Sunday, several people made peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and delivered them to Emmanuel Dining Room. Everyone is practicing social distancing and the guests are being served outside on paper plates. Some of our members have donated food to St. Stephens Lutheran Church's food closet and today, a batch of PB&J sandwiches went to Friendship House so that they could be shared with those in our community experiencing food insecurity ([see photo](#)).

Chesna, our Director of Christian Education, is keeping in touch with our youth via Zoom video conferencing and she is providing parents of pre-school and elementary age children with numerous suggestions for fun activities and learning at home while schools are closed.

continued →



Hovering in our homes can produce loneliness and irritability. A radical change in our routine can arouse anxiety. Fixating on the Coronavirus can fuel our fears. What are you doing to counter these negative emotions?

I offer a few suggestions.

1. Keep current with the news, but also take breaks from it. In their attempt to make the news compelling, newscasters sometimes drive us into a state of hysteria. Be informed, but not inundated by what is happening.
2. Create a sense of normalcy by developing a routine. Structure your day and plan out your week. Make a list of projects to tackle. This may be the perfect time to clean out your closet or go through the boxes of photos that never made it into albums. Make a list of people to call and have a few warm conversations. Recall rich times you have had together. Share your hopes and dreams. Chances are you will boost someone's day, not to mention your own.
3. Spend time in prayer and reflection each day. Find a spot where you can be comfortable and away from distractions. Breathe deeply. Pray. It may help to read a prayer, a passage of Scripture, or devotional material. Keep a gratitude journal and give thanks to our Creator.
4. Spur those endorphins! Exercise your body as well as your brain. Walk or run outside and observe the beauty that surrounds you. Flowers are erupting through the soil, trees are budding, and the forsythia is blazing! Even if you are unable to walk or run, lift your arms! While sitting, march in place! Wiggle your toes! Keep moving! Your body is a precious gift from God, please care for it.
5. Do something creative. You may try baking a new dish, painting, knitting, or writing poetry.
6. Listen to inspiring music. If you have not seen the following YouTube video of the Rotterdam Orchestra (each in his/her home sheltering in place) playing Beethoven's 9th Symphony – *Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee* – I highly recommend it. See it here: <https://youtu.be/3eXT60rbBVk>

Remember: Worship, ministry, and mission are not cancelled. We are simply doing things virtually until this crisis passes. We are still here for one another. As one of our nation's governors said, "We are socially distanced, but remain spiritually connected."

If you need pastoral care, please contact Jill, Sudie, or me.

Greg Jones: gregjones@wpc.org

Sudie Niesen Thompson: sniesenthompson@wpc.org

Jill Getty: jgetty@wpc.org

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Greg".

Gregory Knox Jones
Senior Pastor/Head of Staff