

Greetings WCUMC,

Well we are one week into the new "CoVid-19 Normal" with so much of our social world being shut down. A week ago we wondered why they were asking churches to be closed but not bars and restaurants, and now all public facing businesses from bars and restaurants to hair salons and dentist offices are shut down along with churches. With the exception of those who lived through World War II, we have never experienced anything quite like this and I am confident that at a minimum it feels weird. For many, the uncertainty is producing anxiety and fear. We are all susceptible, but before we allow our sense of feeling unsettled to turn into despair and hopelessness let us be reminded that for those in relationship with our Lord Jesus there is always a foundation of certainty grounded in Him.

Matthew in his gospel records the words of Jesus from the Sermon on the Mount. His words of certainty and confidence for the crowd on the hillside are equally impactful for us today.

NLT Matthew 6:25 "So I tell you, don't worry about everyday life-- whether you have enough food, drink, and clothes. Doesn't life consist of more than food and clothing? 26 Look at the birds. They don't need to plant or harvest or put food in barns because your heavenly Father feeds them. And you are far more valuable to him than they are. 27 Can all your worries add a single moment to your life? Of course not. 28 "And why worry about your clothes? Look at the lilies and how they grow. They don't work or make their clothing, 29 yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. 30 And if God cares so wonderfully for flowers that are here today and gone tomorrow, won't he more surely care for you? You have so little faith! 31 "So don't worry about having enough food or drink or clothing. 32 Why be like the pagans who are so deeply concerned about these things? Your heavenly Father already knows all your needs, 33 and he will give you all you need from day to day if you live for him and make the Kingdom of God your primary concern. 34 "So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today.

Lately I have been summarizing these verses as I talk with people by simply saying, "We need to trust God and not do dumb stuff." Meaning we trust God that all of this will work out and ultimately work together for good, but we don't go out and risk ourselves and our vulnerable friends and family by putting ourselves in direct contact with folks who could have the virus and trust God to protect us in our risky behavior. God has given us both faith and rational minds, faith to place our complete confidence in Him and rational minds to be able to make good decisions. Jesus makes it clear that when we place our confidence in God the Father, we will be freed to focus on serving the Kingdom of God.

WORSHIP & CONNECTION

It is that balance of faith and rationality that our church council has been operating in as we have made the decision to cancel Wednesday Family Discipleship until school starts back and only worship via Facebook Live at 11:00 Sunday morning. By not gathering in person we make the good choice to eliminate the risk of spreading the virus, but by participating in online worship we honor God with our faith and trust. We are evaluating based on two week cycles, but with the current CDC guideline of no in-person gatherings greater than 50 people for the next 8 weeks, we may not be worshipping in the sanctuary until Mother's Day. It is important for us to recognize that church has not been cancelled, we are just having worship, discipleship and mission work in new ways that are appropriate to the current reality. For certain, we are worshipping online March 22nd, 29th and April 5th.

A couple of things to be aware of regarding our time of worship. First, you can watch the livestream regardless of whether or not you are on Facebook. Simply [click here](#) or search in Google, "Westside Community United Methodist Church Facebook" and click on our church. It may ask for a login, but you can close that. Choose videos on the left toolbar and enjoy the service! Even non-Facebook users can click and view. Second, the video is available all the time, but if you watch at 11:00 when we live stream those of you who are Facebook users can interact with each other via the comments section. Through comments we can pass the peace electronically during the entire broadcast.

GENEROSITY

In regards to giving, in the providence of God, Brenda got electronic giving set-up last Tuesday, one day before Governor Beshear asked churches to close. God knew we would need this in the days and weeks to come. To make your tithe electronically you can either go to our webpage (<https://www.westsidecommunityumc.org/donate-now>) or download the Church Center app on your smart phone and choose Westside as your church. On the app you can give by direct ACH draft, debit/credit cards, or even via text message. You can also set up automatic payments so that your tithe is automatically debited from your bank account each week and you don't have to worry about ever writing a check again. The auto pay feature can also be suspended at any time with just the click of a button. There is also old fashioned snail mail or just dropping off a check at church. I will be at the church every Wednesday from 11:30 until 8:00. Just because we are not meeting in person doesn't mean that ministry has stopped or that bills have gone away.

MISSIONS

In many ways it is more important than ever to be faithful in our tithe, because we are entering a season where so many in our church and community who struggle under normal circumstances will find themselves in pretty dire straits. We need to be there as a church to help. To that end, Nicole and Margie have worked with the children's ministry team to continue to prepare a Wednesday night meal that will be available for pick-up or delivery. We did a test run this past Wednesday and served almost 60 meals. If you need a hot meal on Wednesday or know of families that do, please text Nicole, Margie or myself by 10:00 AM and let us know how many adults and kids you have. Meals will be ready for pick-up at 5:30 or delivery will be made between 5:30 and 6:30. As we move forward in this new normal, if there is both the need and the resources we may add a Sunday evening meal as well.

DISCIPLESHIP

We are also working on ways to continue in the learning aspect of discipleship. We hope to have any of the Sunday School classes that are interested set-up to have weekly "Zoom" meetings where you can interact with each other via computer. My goal is to have this available by Sunday, March 29th but it may be April 5th. I also hope to use the same format to have a mid-week Bible study that I hope to have launched the week beginning March 29th.

Thank you all for your patience and acceptance of doing church in new and unfamiliar ways. I have been so encouraged this past week as I have been out buying the supplies for these Wednesday night meals. Despite people being stressed and worried about supplies, in every store I have gone to this week, people have been respectful of personal space, patient, courteous and friendly to each other. The Holy

Spirit, working through prevenient grace, is alive and well working in our world! As I watch folks, it is my hope and prayer that we come to the otherside of these strange times a better country and community, having come together to overcome. We as the people of God can be the leaders in this effort by always sharing hope and joy, and by living sacrificially in front of others. Christa shared a story with me of a young couple who, after checking out, gave some of their groceries to an older couple who were looking for those items but the store was out. That is personal sacrifice for the good of others and that testifies to the glory of God. May we all live in such a way, not just during our new normal but every day of our lives.

Know that I love you all and am praying for you. I am trying to call ten people in our congregation every day just to check in. If you need anything please text or call me ([859-333-3902](tel:859-333-3902)) and I will do everything I can to help. The staff are available via their cell phones, but they are all working from home. As a final note, if any of you are needing to do homework with your children but do not have Internet at home, please call me and I will meet you at the church so you can use the church wifi to take care of your kids' education needs.

Your brother in Christ,

Faron