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March 12, 2020

Dear Westminster family,

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The staff has been following the developments regarding the coronavirus (COVID-19) closely. We've been receiving updates and guidance from local and state officials as well as our denomination. The information seems to change daily as we continue to learn about this virus.

The safety and health of Westminster members, friends, and our whole community are our highest priority.

Governor Whitmer has suggested that communities of faith with more than 100 people cancel their services. Therefore, we will not be opening the doors for worship this Sunday. We will, however, livestream the 11a worship service with Gene Ryan preaching. The service bulletin will be emailed to the church email list and be available on the church website. We encourage those with livestream capabilities to get together with a few others who don't have that capability. This, of course, means that other activities planned for Sunday-- church school, worship centers, the nursery, faith formation offerings, Winds practice, the after-worship soup luncheon, youth groups, etc.-- will be canceled for this week.

In addition, all activities and events at the church will be postponed at least through March 20. We are discerning ways to support our neighbors who need food and safe places during the day.

You may think these precautionary measures are extreme. Maybe they are. Medical professionals and governmental leaders are telling us that seeking to prevent the spread of this virus is essential. This virus is particularly dangerous to people over the age of 60, and many people under the age of 40 could be carriers with no presenting symptoms. This makes this virus particularly dangerous for a multi-generational church family like ours. We have the added blessing and challenge of being a facility that is used by all ages throughout the week. It is our responsibility to make sure we are doing everything we can to care for those in our community who may be most susceptible to this virus.

I want to repeat that the leadership of the congregation is monitoring the situation carefully, and if there are major changes with our community we will respond accordingly. We will do everything we can to communicate our evolving response to you effectively. Please feel free to contact Rev. Laurie Hartzell at [laurieh@wpcgr.org](mailto:laurieh@wpcgr.org), or Kathy Cisler at [kathrync@wpcgr.org](mailto:kathrync@wpcgr.org) with any concerns.

This Lent we have been living with the Breastplate prayer of St. Patrick. As we live into this season of uncertainty around this virus, we know that Christ is before us and behind us. Christ is with us and within us. Christ will comfort and restore us. Indeed, Christ surrounds us all – even amid pandemics! And Christ often shows up in the likes of us! So please take the time to check on vulnerable people in safe ways. Aren't phones a gift?

Grace and peace,

Rev. Laurie Hartzell  
Interim Executive Pastor