

Friday, March 13, 2020

Dear Friends,

It is with a heavy heart that I inform you that we have decided to cancel all activities at Lakeside beginning Sunday, March 15, through March 31. Like you, I have watched news conferences, listened to public health officials, and heeded the advice of our Governor. I have talked with other pastors and consulted several physicians. This morning, Lesley Browder and I discussed the coronavirus pandemic and its effect on our congregation and community. As you know, Lesley is specifically trained in handling crises such as the one we are experiencing. It is her advice, and I concur, that we begin now to limit the spread of the coronavirus in whatever ways are necessary. Robert Sykes, Chair of our Diaconate agrees.

With extra precautions, we will hold the Casserole and Bake Sale tomorrow from 9:30 a.m. until noon. We will also have the funeral to celebrate Ed Astin's life at 3:00 p.m. You may attend these events as you feel comfortable regarding your responsibilities.

We would ask that each of you think about members of our congregation as well as neighbors in the community who may be especially vulnerable at this time. If you or someone you know has a special need, please inform us. There will be people who need help getting groceries, picking up prescriptions, or taking care of other matters. Meals on Wheels may need additional volunteers during this time to help deliver food to clients in our community. Although we may not be able to meet together, we can continue the good work to which we are always called.

For most purposes, the church office will be closed and staff will work from home. We will try to have someone in the office to handle calls and respond to needs from day to day. I will continue to respond to pastoral needs as appropriate during this time. Please inform me of all needs by calling me at 903-8613.

We will use our website, our FaceBook page, and email to communicate as much as possible. Sermons will be posted on the website each Sunday and we are exploring other options for offering worship experiences.

While we have faced many crises together over the years, this is something quite different from anything we have experienced. Several people have mentioned that this is a time when we need to be together. It is; however, the ties that bind us will not be loosened because of this challenge. If anything, our faith, our commitment, and our resolve to be the people of God ought to grow stronger during these days. Let us make the most of this time by prayer, devotion, and mission so that when we are able to worship and serve together again, it will be all the more joyous and meaningful.

During the midweek Lenten service we hosted, Terry and Rob Martin sang "The Northumbrian Evening Prayer." May it become our prayer in these days:

Lord, You have always given bread for the coming day;  
and though I am poor, today I believe.

Lord, You have always given strength for the coming day;  
and though I am weak, today I believe.

Lord, You have always given peace for the coming day;  
and though of anxious heart, today I believe.

Lord, You have always kept me safe in trials;  
and now, tried as I am, today I believe.

Lord, You have always marked the road for the coming day;  
and though it may be hidden, today I believe.

Lord, You have always lightened this darkness of mine;  
and though the night is here, today I believe.

Lord, You have always spoken when time was ripe;  
and though you be silent now, today I believe.

Blessings and good health!

**Jody**