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March 13, 2020

Peace be with you.

In times of uncertainty, we know as believers that we can stand firm on Jesus's promise of peace. *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. John 14:27*

We have been monitoring the fast-changing news on the public health impact of the Coronavirus COVID-19. A church leadership team met Thursday evening to discuss what steps we can and should take to protect the health and safety of our church family.

We invite you to try something new with us for the next two weeks – worship online. In an abundance of caution, we are going to move from gathering at church for Sunday school and worship to holding a Facebook Live worship service. It's an idea we've been working on to target the younger crowd and to stay connected with members who are traveling on Sundays. For now, as we put measures in place to stem the spread of the disease, it is a great time to "go live."

How will it work? On Sunday, March 15 and March 22, visit our church Facebook page at 10:00 AM. Simply click on the "live video" and you will be in the worship service with Toby, Tommy and Hughey – virtually. Not familiar with the church Facebook page? Visit it here: <https://www.facebook.com/DecaturFirstUMC/>

Please call the church office at 256-355-0277 if you would like printed copies of the Sunday school lesson and sermon mailed to you or aquinn@decaturfumc.org to indicate this request.

You might be wondering about other activities at the church during the next two weeks. On Sunday, Associate Pastor Toby Chastain will present an online Sunday school lesson. On Wednesday evenings at 6:00, I (Hughey) will lead a session of our Lenten Study, "Can You Drink the Cup?" Both of these will be available on our website and on Facebook. We encourage you to keep up with your studies, but we are limiting meet and greet opportunities. There will be no gathered worship, First Fellowship meal, or Wednesday evening classes during this time.

We also encourage you to take advantage of our secure online giving tools on our church website: www.decaturfumc.org, texting the word "GIVE" to 256-482-6337, or you can still send in your weekly tithes and offerings by mail.

We are recommending other small groups limit their gatherings as well. First Friends will not meet on March 26. Check with your small group leaders on plans for your group during this time. Our church office will remain open with limited staff on-site during office hours Monday through Thursday. Toby, Jonathan, and I will be in the office, administrative staff will be available by phone, but will work in isolation while at church. Our First Grace Child Development Center will continue until further notice.

Other Precautions to Keep You Safe

- Our custodial service comes daily. We have asked them to pay special attention to high-touch areas such as push bars and door handles, light switches, and handrails.
- Passing the peace, passing the plate, and passing the red registration pad are all prime ways to pass germs! When we return to gathering for worship, we will still wave instead of hug, and we will have offering plates at the altar and we will use an alternate method for registering attendance.

The leadership team is very mindful that these are unusual changes that we are asking you to make, though not unprecedented. In times of power and water outages and with the threat of storm, we have not met. In this case, we are worshipping in a different way in order to do our part to protect our community from the spread of this disease.

Know that your church staff is available if you have any needs or concerns. Please call us at the office at 256-355-0277.

Join us at 10 AM on Sunday for our first-ever Facebook Live worship service - and invite a friend to tune it, too. Remember that you can join us through Facebook at 9:00 AM for Sunday school, also.

Grace and Peace,
Hughey Reynolds
Senior Pastor

Jeff Earley
Administrative Board Chair