

PEACE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
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Blessings Friends,

This is a different time for us all. We all are finding ourselves struggling to find our path through this COVID-19 event. Our old patterns and plans have all changed, and we are living into a new reality... just for a little while. As I preached a couple of



weeks ago, "This too shall pass", and in time we will return to a new reality. It won't be the same as before – but it will be new and provide numerous opportunities for us to reestablish relationships, return to work, and go where we want when we want to go.

Your Peace Church Council, lay leadership and staff have all been working diligently to continue finding new and vital ways for us to connect, worship, learn, share, and be the church we are called to be. We are doing everything we can to provide as much normalcy and familiarity" with our ministry, and continue the administrative functions of the church. The creative support of so many is allowing us to provide virtual worship, hold on-line meetings and studies, and for us to connect with one another via telephone.

Through it all, I know that God has been with us. I have personally been drawn to a deeper connection with God, providing me with hope and promise of a new day. God has been sustaining me, and all of us, as God has done for generation upon generation. And even though we are feeling anxious and overwhelmed, know that God's steadfast love is with you! God is with us now and will be with us in the future helping us to regain our footing on solid ground.

One of the things that keeps us grounded is the routine and pattern we have in our church year. I love the Lenten Season. It has always been a special time of renewal and focus. With the Coronavirus restrictions, we have not been able to

engage in our normal Lenten emphasis, and now we are face-to-face with Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter in the coming week. It will be a different Holy Week for us all. Yet, this is still a very special week (especially in times such as these) for us to come together and remember the new life that springs from this week. Out of darkness, despair and death springs NEW LIFE – NEW HOPE – NEW PROMISES – NEW LIFE!

While we will not be meeting in person for these special days, we will be celebrating our services on-line. We hope you join us and engage as fully as possible with your Peace Church family. Even though we are not physically with one another, we are united in ONE SPIRIT and ONE LOVE that is present in Jesus the Christ. I miss you all and look forward to the day when we will be back together.

Here is our HOLY WEEK WORSHIP SCHEDULE:

SUNDAY, April 5 PALM SUNDAY WORSHIP

- 9:00a LIVE STREAM FACEBOOK
Peace United Church of Christ page
LIVE STREAM WEBSITE
Peace Church website
(www.peacechurchucc.org)
- 11:00a RECORDED WEBSITE
Peace Church website
(www.peacechurchucc.org)

FRIDAY, April 10 GOOD FRIDAY WORSHIP

- 7:00p RECORDED WEBSITE
Peace Church website
(www.peacechurchucc.org)

SUNDAY, April 12 EASTER WORSHIP

- 9:00a LIVE STREAM FACEBOOK
Peace United Church of Christ page
LIVE STREAM WEBSITE
Peace Church website
(www.peacechurchucc.org)
- 11:00a RECORDED WEBSITE
Peace Church website
(www.peacechurchucc.org)

I want to share with you what is planned for our ministry in this new reality which we are living.

STAFFING

The Peace Church staff is “working from home” as we want to make sure they are provided as safe of an environment as possible. Clare will be managing as much as she can from home and will be the lead on our Sunday morning worship service management, etc. Debby will do the vast majority of her work from home, and will come to the office on an “as-needed” basis to perform administrative functions (eg, weekly donation deposits, pay bills), assist with Sunday morning technology, etc. I plan to come into the office every morning to check messages/mail, walk through the building, and get my Peace Church fix. I, however, will also be primarily working from home, and have greatly restricted any personal contacts/meetings. If there is a need to contact any of us, we are accessible via our email or phone. We do not want to lose touch with you, so PLEASE just call so we can talk and hear how you are doing.

PASTORAL CARE

While we continue to meet the ever-growing Pastoral Care needs of the congregation, it has become more difficult as I am not able to meet physically one-on-one with folks. I greatly encourage you to call me, email me, text me, use two cans and a string, or just YELL LOUD! 😊 Seriously, providing diligent Pastoral Care is of the highest level in our ministry, so please let me/us know if there is a need.

CALLING TREE

As part of our continued outreach and care, over 25 of our members have volunteered to call members of our congregation. Clare is coordinating this initiative. We will be frequently checking in on every household in our congregation. I invite you to share with your caller how you are doing, and if there are any pastoral needs and/or ANYTHING you need (ie, food, assistance, etc). The only way we will know is if you let us know. Special thanks to all of our callers!!

PRAYERS

Most of all, we invite you to continually pray for the wellness of all people. I also pray for all of the incredible health care professionals, medical researchers, nursing home care providers, police officers, firefighters, mental health professionals, grocery store and pharmacy employees, and all others who are on the front lines of this pandemic. I hope and pray that we will experience God’s love and grace in amazing ways until we can meet again. If you have a prayer request, PLEASE let us know.

WORSHIP

Thanks to technology and our great Technology Team (in particular Kirby Bakken) we have been able to both Live Stream and record our worship services. Live Stream services are at 9:00a on Sunday mornings and can be viewed both on Facebook Live (Peace United Church of Christ site) and on the Peace Church website (www.peacechurchucc.org). These services are also being recorded and will be available on our Peace Church website at 11:00a each Sunday. At this point, we are planning on suspending worship minimally through April. We will make further decisions for our May worship the closer we get to those dates. We do not know for certain when we will be able to worship together again, so until then, I invite you to join us, virtually, and be part of the Peace Church family.

ASSOCIATE PASTOR SEARCH TEAM

With the unanimous support from the Peace Church Council, the Peace Church Associate Pastor Search Team continues to work behind the scenes to call our new Associate Pastor. We have received profiles (resumes) from candidates and we are in the process of reviewing these documents. It is more difficult to have our team meet as we are bound to discussions using on-line video conferencing. While this is not the best platform to have open discussions, we are working hard to make it work. Once we prayerfully discern if we should pursue further conversations with any of these candidates, we will try to coordinate a video-conference interview. We will be restricted to move forward with any candidate until we have the freedom for travel, etc. Until then, I ask for your prayers for the Search Team and our future Associate Pastor.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Along with our on-line worship services, Debby is providing a Live Stream/Digital book read every week. This can be found on our Peace United Church of Christ Facebook page. We are also sending out weekly lessons for each child/family. Our hope is that families will engage with these studies and explore the joy of faith formation.

TEEN MINISTRY

Both Ben and Tracy miss the Peace teens so much! While we all figure out our new normal, the teens are looking into the future.

- The youth group will be using the Marco Polo app to stay connected. If you need help getting your teen set up, let one of us know. They are also working on a game for fun, connection, learning, and of course, physical distancing.
- Starting this week, Ben will be putting together short Faith Formation lessons that you can do as a family.

CONFIRMATION

Our Confirmation program, which was well underway, got derailed a little due to the Shelter In Place order. Since we have not been able to meet in person, we have developed materials for our Confirmands to work on at home. Our hope is that our Confirmands will be ready for the May 31 Confirmation Service. Please pray for all of our Confirmands and their mentors.

If your Confirmand needs any assistance with any of the home-project work Ben is ready, willing and (kinda?) able to help with their confirmation projects. Please contact Debby or me as well. We are all here in your journey.

ADULT FAITH FORMATION & MEETINGS

Our Men's and Women's fellowship groups continue to meet via on-line video conferencing. We are also holding many of our internal meetings on-line to avoid the need to gather in person. We are planning to add our Tuesday Beverage and Bible, and a new book study after Easter on-line as well. If you would like to be a part of any of these groups, please contact Debby or me and we will link you up to the process.

FINANCES AND STEWARDSHIP

As our ministry carries on (albeit different) we continue to have expenses. I want to thank the LARGE MAJORITY of folks who continue to support the ministry with their financial gifts. The Peace Church Council is adamant that we need to continue our ministry, not only in the present but continually pressing to the future. To realize this, we are asking you to continue your financial support of Peace Church. Through your generous giving, we have been able to create incredible ministry and want that to continue strongly and boldly. So, THANK YOU ALL for the support and blessings that you provide!

MOVING FORWARD

As we move forward, we will always be at the ready to adapt, adjust, and create. We greatly respect and honor the advice and guidance of our leaders and health care professionals and look to them for direction on any future next steps. I pray we will all be safe and observe social / personal distancing and hand washing!

It is hard for us to accurately share and plan with the ever-changing landscape and directives we receive. But, for now, this is what is happening in the life of Peace Church. We invite you engage as fully as possible via on-line communications, phone, email, and most importantly, through prayers. Please let us know if there is more we can do to help keep us connected.

Missing you all! On behalf of the Peace Church Council and Staff,

Peace and Love,

Pastor Paul

