

Cancelling Worship at Trinity and Other Faithful Responses to COVID-19 (A letter from Pastor Jon):

Dear Trinity family,

This week has been a roller coaster for me. It has been difficult to find some grounding in what to do with the fluidity of the coronavirus. I have vacillated between thinking we are blowing this way out of proportion, to finding myself tossing and turning, unable to sleep due to anxiety about what to do next. There was never a "How to Deal with a Pandemic" class in seminary, so this is new for me, and perhaps for all of us.

This morning I received the recommendation from our presbytery to cancel all group gatherings, including church, for a minimum of two weeks. After polling our elders and deacons, we feel it is best to adhere to their advice to **cancel worship and other gatherings** for two reasons: the first being that we desire to keep everyone as healthy as possible in our church family. I would regret nothing greater than knowing one of us spread something unintentionally to someone else.

The second reason is just as important: our practicing social distancing now is about the well-being of the entire community-at-large. The point is to stay ahead of the curve *before the outbreak spreads too quickly*. In a recent article, circulated to the medical team from the CEO of Baptist, the writer put it clearly for me:

"For the vast majority of people nationwide and worldwide, this virus **is not about you**. This is one of those times in life, in history, when your actions are about something bigger. They are about someone else. They are about something greater, a greater good that you may not ever witness. A person you will save who you will never meet...So what is our work? Yes, you need to wash your hands and stay home if you are sick. But the biggest work you can do is expand your heart and your mind to see yourself and see your family as part of a much bigger community that can have a massive—**hugely massive**—impact on the lives of other people...You can help by canceling anything that requires a group gathering. You can help by not using the medical system unless it is urgent. You can help by staying home if you are sick. You can help by cooking or shopping or doing errands for a friend who needs to stay home. You can help by watching someone's kid if they need to cover for someone else at work. You can help by ordering take-out from your local restaurants. Eat the food yourself or find someone who needs it. You can help by offering to help bring someone's college student home or house out-of-town students if you have extra rooms. You can help by asking yourself, "What can I and my family do to help?" "What can we offer?" You can help by seeing yourself as part of something bigger than yourself."

I realize that when fear is circulating in the air, we need each other more than ever. So we are developing ways to stay connected with each other throughout this uncertain season.

For those who are online: we are starting a YouTube channel and posting on Facebook where sermons and music can be accessed. We will be subscribing to Zoom, a conference call network, so we can continue having meetings and our adult Sunday school class.

For those not online: we will mail out sermons and call in to check up on one another. We will do our best to use this time to be creative while continuing our mission of building community. If you are someone with a need, or are feeling isolated and alone, please let myself or one of our leaders know and we will be glad to help in any way we can.

As crazy as this all is, the COVID-19 pandemic is an important reminder that we are interconnected, interdependent and all in this together. I have no doubt that God is at work in this as well, touching the depth of our humanity to help us spread viral faith, hope and love.

Thank you for your understanding, and I will be in touch soon about how we can be together in other ways!

With faith, hope and love,
Jon