

Dear Members and Friends of Morton Memorial United Methodist Church,

As you know, we're in a situation none of us have been in before and things are changing day by day. In I Corinthians 12 the Apostle Paul casts a vision of the church as functioning as a human body, and "when one part suffers, all parts suffer with it," but COVID-19 is testing our understanding and commitment to our being the body of Christ.

We've seen some organizations close. Others stay open. And both are options.

However, we know that this virus's potentially lethal impact depends so much on age and underlying health conditions, and it is most dire for the already vulnerable. While many who are under the age of 60 or without other health conditions may not be as worried, that could provide a fleeting sense of security since it is still likely that less vulnerable individuals will inadvertently spread the virus to those who are at greatest risk to contract it. Therefore I believe that not only is it necessary but it is also the most loving thing to do to take this outbreak seriously and play our part to protect ourselves and others, particularly those most in harm's way.

A variety of experts are saying we must work together to 'flatten the epidemic curve' — which means slowing down the rate at which people are infected and spreading it out over time so that hospitals can keep up with the demand for life-saving health care. One editorialist said today, "...the best real-life contrast in approaches may be the difference between how Philadelphia and St. Louis handled the 1918 flu outbreak that killed tens of millions worldwide. Because St. Louis acted earlier and more aggressively, the per capita fatality rate was half that of Philadelphia's because the number of people who were sick at any given time stayed much lower and didn't overwhelm hospitals' ability to treat them." (Adam Taylor, sojo.net)

Because we are primarily an older congregation, and because "social distance" is one of the most effective ways to slow the relentless advance of the COVID-19 coronavirus, after conferring with leadership, other pastors and medical experts, we have decided to take the following steps:

We WILL meet for worship this Sunday, March 15, BUT **After Sunday**, WE will CANCEL SERVICES UNTIL APRIL when we will reconsider this decision.

Use your best judgment on attendance as **we will hold a PRAYER SERVICE SUNDAY 11 AM MARCH 15** for our community, our neighbors, our nation, our world, and our leaders.

As for our FOOD MINISTRY, in order to limit contact due to potential sharing of any viruses, we have chosen this month to serve our Saturday families via car loading with pre-loaded boxes of groceries. We will not use the sanctuary and will ask our families to remain in their cars. Therefore we will not need as many volunteers. We will need SOME to help load buggies and

cars. This will limit their and our exposure. IF YOU USUALLY VOLUNTEER, know that we will not be operating as usual. Most of our volunteers will be directing traffic and loading cars.

Until further notice:

No fellowship meal.

No Wednesday meals.

No worship or healing service together.

Choir is suspended until further notice.

Small groups - such as Sunday School and AA are invited to use their best judgment.

Currently, the Wesley building and offices will be open and we will use our best judgment about being there.

Pastor Jodi is still available for pastoral care. Please call or text if you need but she will suspend routine visits.

Please stay connected and check on your family and neighbors making sure everyone has what they need.

We will rely on technology to keep us together and sermons will be available online. We may offer more resources there. Our website address is [www.mortonmemorialumc.com](http://www.mortonmemorialumc.com). We also have a Facebook page and we will work to keep everyone informed.

“Preparation, not panic” is indeed the correct approach, no matter how bad things get.

In 2 Timothy 1:7, Paul tells us, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." This is a time for us to use our power, love, and sound minds to act rationally but decisively to help keep those most vulnerable to COVID-19 safe and cared for by slowing its spread.

Come and pray with us Sunday IF you feel safe to do so. Otherwise, let us look with hope to a blessed April gathering.

If you have questions, please text or email [jodimccullah@gmail.com](mailto:jodimccullah@gmail.com). Stay connected and I hope to see everyone in April.

Blessings,

Pastor Jodi McCullah

Music Director Nancy Allsbrook

Trustees Chair Janet Miller-Schmitt

Administrative Council Chair Tan Hille

Treasurer Rich Wyckoff

Finance Committee Chair Kylene MacDonald

Lay Leader John Hille

Staff-Parish Relations Committee Chair Gene Finnell

Food Ministry Team Leader Alyse Getty