



Rev. Fritz Nelson
Pastor

Elder Judy Wilms
Clerk

Elder Randy Johnson
Treasurer

March 19, 2020

To the Congregation:

On Wednesday evening the elders approved the suspension of worship and other in-person gatherings at First Presbyterian Church during the Covid-19 outbreak. As of now the next public gathering for worship will be on Sunday, April 19th, the week after Easter. This decision follows the recommendation of Eastminster Presbytery, the example of our sister churches and the guidelines of health officials. Like everyone else we will continue monitoring the situation. Regardless of the date, we will celebrate Easter when we gather again.

While suspending worship is emotionally hard for all of us, we feel it is our duty to safeguard the health of the congregation, our staff and the community at large. All HUB classes, workshops, retreats and seminars have also been canceled, postponed or moved online. Pastor Fritz is also suspending all non-emergency visitation.

The church office will remain open to be a center of communication for the congregation. We will be using every tool possible, telephone, mail, email, video as we continue to pray for each other, continue to reach out for each other and continue to worship, teach and stay informed. Our goal is more communication during these times, not less.

Here are some of the ways we'll be communicating with each other:

- Cards and phone calls, coordinated by the deacons. To be a card writer, contact the church office or Shirley Pallard.
- Pastoral calls from Pastor Fritz. You can also call him at (978) 884-2842 or email him at pastorfritz@gmail.com.
- A congregational Facebook page.
- A video ministry in partnership with the Columbiana church, with the goal of streaming Sunday morning services along with some additional content. (To check out last week's service go to youtube.com and type First Presby Columbiana in the search bar.)
- Possible online Sunday School or Bible Study classes. Possible online HUB workshops.
- A simple prayer service for worshipping at home. (Included with this letter and at www.firstpresbycolumbiana.org.)

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- Mailed copies of Pastor Fritz's weekly sermons. (By request. Contact the church office.)

While we're changing how we minister in this time of social distancing, we're still being church together. As your elders we're committed to helping the entire congregation to spiritually and emotionally persevere through these times. We also need your help. Even though we're no longer passing the offering plate every week we've still have to pay staff, pay utilities and cover other expenses. We've included some addressed envelopes. We know these may be economically difficult times for some, but if you are able, please mail in your usual support.

Together we need to persevere in prayer, call and check up on each other, run errands for those who need to be more isolated and be disciplined about our own devotion and worship. In times of extreme stress and challenge we naturally desire to be together, to hold hands, to give hugs, to become pillars of support for our friends and neighbors. We can feel very alone. But we still have each other. We still have a God who promises to walk with us through times easy and hard. We'll be okay.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Fritz & Judy Wilms

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