

March 18, 2020

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

Grosse Pointe Memorial Church, the body of Christ here in this particular place, continues to function as the hands and feet and voice and love of Jesus Christ. Much of the Apostle Paul's ministry was conducted from the "quarantine" of house arrest, yet the gospel message and the Spirit's work continued to impact the world for good and for God. To some, it appears that the words and deeds and ministries of our congregation and the church at large are hobbled by the threat of the pandemic and measures required to limit the spread of infection. I want to offer an alternate perspective.

Our love of God and love of neighbor place an obligation upon the faith community to exercise public health measures proven to reduce the spread of infection which helps to keep our health care system from being overwhelmed and collapsing. **To the degree that we pursue such strategies, we contribute to reducing risk for our entire society, and particularly to those most vulnerable to infection and for those facing other medical emergencies.** As I John 4:21 reminds us, "The commandment we have from God is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also." At this moment in time for most of us, the love of God and neighbor will take the specific forms of social distancing, self-sequestering, the exercise of enhanced hygiene, the use of technology to maintain connections and care, and the classic disciplines of prayer and scripture reading and meditation and almsgiving.

A great challenge for the church in a time of social distancing is to build bridges and find alternate measures that mitigate isolation and maintain community. The staff and leadership of GPMC are working diligently to accomplish this, and are exploring technological solutions that enable safe connection. In his "quarantine," the Apostle Paul communicated through letters that brought his message to the young church. We expect to broaden our outreach as new communication strategies are implemented. We too, will utilize all communication avenues, using email, our website, Facebook, telephone, and the US Postal Service as necessary.

A reality confronting American society will be the suspension of jobs, increasing unemployment, and financial dislocation for industries. This will impact GPMC. The staff has been instructed to reduce or eliminate elective budget expenditures and to review all expenses for the remainder of the year. As the staff does their part to prepare for possible financial shortfalls, it is important for those of you who support our ministry to maintain giving as much as possible.

Accompanying this letter is a list of present actions of staff approved by the Session that are being implemented in response to COVID-19. This involves the cancellation of all in-person public services of worship through May 10 (unfortunately including Holy Week and Easter). An online service of worship each Sunday at 9 am will be offered live (and available later recorded) through our website. We want you informed of these present actions, and to be aware that at a moment's notice our response may require further restrictions due to medical or governmental requirements. Please consult GPMC's Facebook page and website for the latest updates.

Much is left unsaid here, such as developing caring outreach to the sick or quarantined in our congregation and community. More opportunities for ministry to others will present themselves over time. As we see them, the faithful saints of GPMC will seize those opportunities.

Thank you for your continued prayers and your partnership in the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

Mark Diehl, Interim Minister, Head of Staff