

ZION REFORMED UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

201 NORTH POTOMAC STREET • HAGERSTOWN, MD 21740

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March 10, 2020

Beloved Members and Friends of Zion Reformed UCC,

I'm writing in response to the news increased fears of the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19) in Maryland and throughout our country.

Our congregational mission statement points to three core values:

- encouraging spiritual growth,
- building a beloved community, and
- acting for peace and justice.

We are seeking to balance the importance of community (being together) with justice (protecting ourselves and others from contracting or spreading this disease).

Maintaining Health Phase:

"Stay Calm & Wash Your Hands"

We are currently in a "maintaining health" phase. As a result, I am asking each of you to please take precautions to keep yourself and other members of our beloved community safe. This approach includes the following best practices, drawn directly the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines:

- **Stay home and call your doctor if you develop symptoms or have been in close contact with a person known to have coronavirus.** Reported illnesses have ranged from mild symptoms to severe illness and death for confirmed cases. The following symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure: **Fever, Cough, Shortness of breath.**
- **Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds,** especially after using the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.



- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.**
- **Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.** (Then wash your hands!) If a tissue is not available, cough or sneeze into the bend of your elbow. We will make every effort to supply both tissues and hand sanitizer in the pews, the classrooms, and in the Chapel.
- **Refrain from handshakes and hugs.** We'll explore a variety of alternative greetings such as the "namaste" bow used in many meditation traditions or placing your hand over your heart to symbolize a felt sense of connection.
- **Take care of yourself:** support your immune system by prioritizing sleep, eating healthy, drinking fluids, exercising, engaging in spiritual practices (meditation, yoga, etc.) and other activities that help you manage stress.
- **Offering:** In an abundance of caution, we will no longer collect our offering during the worship service. Offering plates will be available before and after worship by all entrances. We are also exploring online donation options, but this will take time.
- **Communion:** We will be looking at ways to ensure that our Communion practices are as safe as possible.
- Zion Church will be more regularly cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a face mask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including coronavirus. Face masks should be used by people who show symptoms of coronavirus to help prevent the spread of the disease to others.

Disruption Phase

If a widespread outbreak occurs in our area, Zion Church will follow state and federal recommendations. We will also explore ways of allowing staff and volunteers to telecommute and providing services, programs, and meetings electronically -- such as through Facebook Live, Zoom Video Conferencing, etc.

When you can not come to church, we will find a way to bring church to you.

Rebuilding Community Phase

When all restrictions are lifted, we will resume our regular activities and continue our ongoing commitment to building the beloved community.

Avoid Misinformation

Please be aware that there is misinformation about the coronavirus on social media, email, and other platforms. We strongly encourage you to **pay attention to the guidelines from trusted sources**, particularly:

- Center for Disease Control and Prevention, available at cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV. Pay particular attention on the left-hand side of that page to the column labeled "What You Should Know" -- which includes links to webpages on "How it spread," "Symptoms," "Prevention & Treatment," "Testing," and "Frequently Asked Questions."
- World Health Organization, available at who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019.

We will continue to send updates as more information becomes available.

Most importantly, thank you for your care, caution, and concern for our beloved community during this time. And, as always, I am grateful to be on this journey with all of you.

Peace to you,

Katie
Rev. Katie Penick, Interim Pastor

Barb
Barb Hendershot, RN, Parish Nurse