

March 13, 2020

**WUMC Important Announcement:
Response to Rising COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Concerns
by Mark Davis, WUMC Lay Leader**

This is an important message from the leadership team at Woodbury United Methodist Church (WUMC) in response to increasing concerns regarding COVID-19, otherwise known as Coronavirus. This message is being sent in lieu of *The Messenger*, which was ready for release today, because much of the information contained therein has been overcome by WUMC's response to recent events as summarized below. *The Messenger* will be revised and released early next week.

The WUMC Church Council has been monitoring guidance by the CDC, local officials, and the New York Annual Conference. Over the past week we have seen the inevitable spread of COVID-19 across our country, recently progressing to our state. While we do not appear to have any confirmed or active cases in the towns served by WUMC, state officials expect that the spread of the virus will move into and become more prevalent in Litchfield and New Haven counties over the next several weeks. Therefore, after prayerful consideration, the Church Council decided in a conference call meeting last night to take precautionary measures to ensure that church members, families, and staff are all in a position to protect themselves from illness and do our part to slow the spread of the virus. Please understand that the decision to take these steps was made out of an abundance of caution to protect the ones we love, many of whom are at higher risk than the general population, while recognizing the essential role that WUMC serves in the lives of its members and our communities. The life of the church goes on, albeit with temporary changes that are deemed to be prudent in the near term.

The following steps are effective immediately and will be re-evaluated at the end of March:

- Through March 31st, church services will be held. However, in-church attendance is restricted to people deemed necessary to conduct an abbreviated service to be live-streamed online. Pastor John, Chris Shay, and Theron Kissinger will be the only members required for conducting the service this Sunday, March 15, 2020. There will be no choir participation this week. To watch live or archived recordings of worship services on Facebook, go to www.woodburyumc.net and click on the Facebook icon. No personal Facebook account is required. Live streaming of services can also be viewed on Instagram at [woodburyumcct](https://www.instagram.com/woodburyumcct) from within one's own Instagram app. For those with an Instagram account the service may be more interactive and may be easier for some to hear. Please contact Theron Kissinger via e-mail at theronk@hotmail.com if you have any issues with either method.
- Pastoral visitations will be conducted by phone unless face-to-face support is deemed essential.
- All 'non-essential' meetings and events will either be held remotely or rescheduled/cancelled. Committee chair persons or meeting organizers will communicate decisions regarding their respective meetings/events. This week's *Messenger* will be revised and published early next week to reflect these decisions. Every effort will be made to communicate on a timely basis through multiple channels (*Messenger*, e-mail, phone).
- Meetings deemed to be both essential and to require face to face participation will be scheduled on a case-by-case basis by WUMC Chairpersons in consultation with Church Council.
- Regular office hours will be maintained by Pastor John and Kathy Craig. Meetings that cannot be conducted by phone will be scheduled by appointment only. Please minimize unannounced drop-ins.
- The 2020 Lenten Study "The Walk" will be held remotely via teleconference (203-633-3808 -- no PIN required) as originally scheduled on Tuesday evenings (6:30 – 8:00 pm) through April 7th.
- A teleconference (203-633-3808 -- no PIN required) will be held this Sunday after the live-streamed service (at 11:45 am) to provide an opportunity to express joys/concerns, ask questions, and seek assistance. Similar opportunities for remote fellowship will be held on Sundays at 11:45 am and Mondays/Wednesdays at 7:30 pm, using the same call-in #.
- The Pasta Dinner scheduled March 21 will be rescheduled or cancelled. Stay tuned.
- WUMC meetings/events scheduled for April and beyond will be re-evaluated at the end of March.
- Participation in non-WUMC meetings or events is at the discretion of each individual. Please contact outside organizers regarding cancellation/rescheduling and steps being taken to reduce the risk of community spread.
- The Church Council will continue to monitor rapidly evolving status and guidance. All the above steps will be re-evaluated with new developments communicated as-needed.

We understand that this is a difficult time with much uncertainty. Some will experience direct effects of the virus, while others may undergo economic hardship due to reduced hours or inability to work. Rest assured that there is no need for panic and the principles being taught to our Sunday School students from the book "Unafraid" remain valid and useful in addressing this pandemic. The WUMC Leadership team will continue to do everything it can to provide support to those in need. Please stay in touch with fellow members, bring forward any concerns or need for support, and pray for those affected, including health care workers that put themselves at risk. Please do not hesitate to call Pastor John (845-707-5152), Mark Davis (860-882-4427) or the WUMC office (203-263-4775) to seek assistance.