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We Care: McDowell County citizens commit to care for one another

From staff reports
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Even as some local churches are cancelling in-person services, they are taking action against the coronavirus with an informative website launching on Sunday and signs to show unity.

Grace Community Church recently announced this on their Facebook page about cancelling services Sunday:

“ However, we will livestream the service at 9:15am on Facebook. Though we are advised to not host large gatherings, if you are well, we encourage you to host Facebook Live watch parties. Gather your life group, your families, or your neighbors to worship together.--Sunday evening activities are also cancelled at this time. We all know that these are trying times. However, be assured that, wherever this leads, we will walk through it together. As a local church family we have weathered storms before and by God’s grace we will weather this one. We are honored to serve you and honestly encouraged to see how God is going to work in and through us during these difficult times.”

Other local churches stated on their websites or Facebook pages that there will be no Sunday services but online options will be available for worship. Many are also cancelling church events, hoping to reschedule them at a later date when the coronavirus outbreak has passed.

At the same time, several local pastors are spearheading the We Care movement.

We Care is connected to a new website, mcdowellcares.com, that launching Sunday. While the website will provide links to information available from the local Emergency Management and from NCDHHS, the main purpose of the website is to focus attention on two important opportunities: praying and helping.

“Right now fear is spreading at a far more significant rate than any illness ever could,” said Pastor Andrew Walker of East Marion Baptist Church. “And it is here that we as Christians offer great hope. We who believe in God’s control over all things, and who believe in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus can communicate peace, compassion, and hope at this time. That’s what We Care is all about. By banding together as Christians, we can offer practical and spiritual help at this uncertain time.”

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The We Care signs going up in the community serve a single purpose: wherever anyone travels in McDowell County they will see a community filled with caring people who are committed to praying for and helping one another. We Care means We Pray. We Care means We Help, said organizers.

“McDowell Cares is a timely opportunity for local churches to come together to encourage others with Christ like compassion during a time of uncertainty,” said Pastor Jonathan Tipper of Greenlee Baptist Church of Old Fort. “We can show concern for one another in a time when many aren’t sure what to do or where to turn.”

Christians have a history of stepping up when trouble comes, not turning away. When Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf, within a week McDowell County had a tractor trailer loaded with supplies headed to the Gulf. When the market fell in 2008 and gas

and food prices went up, Lunch Bunch, a ministry to feed children during the summer was born. To date Lunch Bunch has fed almost 500 children a summer and McDowell's citizens have given almost \$500,000 to fund it.

Pastor Jerry Lewis of Grace Community Church said, "We have a great history in the county as pastors and this crisis will be no different. We also have a great emergency management department who excel at protecting our people. Our call as pastors is to shepherd our people through this time."

Local churches and organizations partnering in We Care include East Marion Baptist, Old Fort First Baptist, Greenlee Baptist, Grace Community, Liberty Freewill Baptist, Pleasant Gardens Baptist and the Blue Ridge Baptist Association.

To pick up a We Care sign, visit Grace Community Church office on Sunday, March 15 from 9 a.m. to noon or Monday through Thursday between the hours 9 a.m. — 5 p.m.

For more information please call Christina Redman at 828-724-9599 or email christina@graceforall.org.