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**Good Shepherd**

**Community of Faith**

***An American Baptist and United Church of Christ***

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To my Good Shepherd Community of Faith Family,

Isiah 40:31 Gives us hope so we do not worry in times such as these. “*But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.”* (NLT)

We who are living amid the realities of the COVID-19 pandemic are living in uncertain and difficult times, not unlike the experience of the early Christians. We have never been in the situation we now find ourselves. Our world is turned upside down. Fear, insecurity, and anxiety concerning how COVID-19 will affect us, those we love, and our communities -including the church - consume us. Overwhelmed by a surplus of information coming at us on social media, television, radio, and newspapers, we seem to be confused, and paralyzed by not knowing what to do. Yet our faith commends us to do otherwise, to not be consumed by fear, insecurity, and anxiety. As followers of Jesus, we put our trust in God who raised Jesus from the dead and who, in the power of the Holy Spirit, sends us to be about God’s mission of restoration, reconciliation and wholeness in the face of brokenness, alienation, and illness. Now is the time for us to be the Church that God wants us and needs us to be.

While “social distancing” and mask wearing might be the order of the day to lessen the spread of COVID-19, spiritual and non-physical closeness in these times of isolation and quarantine is called for more than ever before. Prayer is a potent force in this time. In prayer, we are profoundly connected to God and one another in deep and meaningful ways that passes all understanding. In prayer, we are never alone. In addition to continuing our deep, personal prayer practices, I commend all of you as we came together to develop specific ways to reach out and connect with one another, and our neighbors near and far, using available technology. Intercessory prayer lists; telephone chains calling on the sick and shut-in and those in self-isolation because of the coronavirus; texting and emailing one another, are all important ways that we stayed connected to God and our neighbors. These holy spaces are spaces of listening and caring. In prayer, we connect to one another and to God as people of hope in this challenging time.

I invite you to continue to be creative and try new ways to be united to God and each other in Christ. This is a time to be Church, the Body of Christ, in new ways.

Lastly, may we stand with our neighbors, friends, and family for the injustices of this world. May we be united in the love of Christ. As the adage says, “If you stand for nothing you will fall for anything” Let us be who Jesus called us to be! Philippians 2:4 also encourages us *“4 Don’t look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.”* (NLT)

As your pastor, I want to encourage you to remember that we lean on the Living God as God’s people have through the ages, as Isaiah attests when God says: *“Don’t be afraid, for I am with you. Don’t be discouraged, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand.”* (Isiah 41:10 NLT)

Continue praying for our community;
Continue hygienic hand-washing practices; wear your mask
Continue trusting in God!

Know that I continue in prayer for you – and the leadership is praying earnestly for the protection and healing of our community, as we seek the welfare of our city and country. We are planning on opening in the next few months, information will be forth coming. Please be patient as we plan for this!

In Christ Service,

Pastor Tanya