

March 13, 2020

Greetings friends and family of Dacula United Methodist Church.

I've been your interim pastor for just 3 weeks now and as such, I have full responsibility for giving guidance to the leadership of this congregation through this current pandemic until such time as things return to some level of normalcy.

I write today to let you know that your staff and leadership have been in constant communication with me regarding the current pandemic all week long. We've been considering a multitude of options that cover a broad spectrum of possibilities. Then this happened; our Bishop, Sue Hauptert-Johnson, posted this announcement to all North Georgia United Methodist churches:

*"Dear North Georgia Conference Clergy and Church Members,
As we receive information regarding the COVID-19 virus and hear of the increasing number of cases reported in our state, I strongly urge that Sunday worship services be cancelled through the end of the month. We will closely monitor this situation and be back in touch after Sunday, March 22. Please use your discretion in deciding whether to hold smaller gatherings like small groups and Bible studies."*

I understand there may be skepticism regarding the actual threat the virus presents. While most people with strong immune systems will survive this virus, there is significant potential for unknowingly transmitting the virus to people who may not, and therein lays the problem.

*Bishop Hauptert-Johnson continues in her letter,
"Your Cabinet, as long-time United Methodists and shepherds of churches, recognizes that weekly public worship is an essential part of our method and a vital spiritual discipline. We also recognize our need to gather for worship in times of anxiety and uncertainty. Now, however, our public gathering may violate Wesley's first general rule, which is "Do no harm."*

"We know from healthcare officials that the virus is highly contagious but that with effort we might slow the rate of infection in order to allow our health care services to respond appropriately.

"Under these highly unusual circumstances, the safe course of action is to stay home and avoid exposure. Please call a friend or a prayer partner, and read comforting Scripture or devotional materials to calm your spirit. Be sure to call your pastor if you are especially troubled.

We all need to be good stewards and keep tithes and offerings current even when we are not present at worship..."

Know that you are in my prayers.

*With gratitude for you and your leadership,
Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson*

To be clear, we will not be having worship services on Sunday the 15th of March, the 22nd of March, nor the 29th of March. This also means events planned for this month will be postponed until later. The office personnel are to work remotely as much as possible. The preschool will follow the same protocol

as Gwinnett's Schools, but they will be sharing with parents under a separate cover. If you have specific questions about small group meetings or Bible studies, please contact the leader of the activity directly for details. I would encourage you to continue to worship, even while social distancing, during the month of March. Athens First UMC does a good job and live streams their service. The link is <http://athensfirstumc.org/webcast/> if you are interested.

Communication during historic times such as this are critical. Please acknowledge and follow this sequence until we are through this few weeks: Top of the information chain is [Cady Ransom](#), Church Admin, and [Melissa English](#), Director of Communications, both of whom will be in daily contact with me. These are paid staff and they know the people and protocols. We must all check plans with and through them; whether you are making plans, cancelling plans, or checking in on plans. Information not coming from Cady or Melissa will perchance do more to disrupt and confuse than help. [Yes we have other leaders in place who are wonderfully equipped to lead however I want to rely on paid staff rather than volunteers at this time. Trust me].

Secondarily I'd like to address the matter of continuing your generous support of our church and it's ministries in this time of suspension. Please look at the online and postal giving opportunities during this worship hiatus. To be completely pedestrian, while our gatherings are postponed, the bills are not. There are overhead expenses that come daily; Georgia Power wants their share, AT&T as well, insurers and payroll, and more. Please make a point to continue your monthly giving and if you can be generous at this time, be aware that our loose plate offerings from guests and non-pledgers simply goes away until we meet again. We will get through this but your prayerful considerations for many things will make the difference between weathering this storm well or poorly. I am confident that you will make the most helpful choices you can and your church family appreciates it.

Please stay connected to Cady and Melissa via email with inquiries or plans. We will utilize BaseCamp to disseminate information to church leadership and our church Mailchimp email system and FaceBook page to relay information to our congregation as this is a constantly evolving situation. You can subscribe to our Mailchimp emails by going to daculaumc.org and clicking on the grey "DUMC Email Subscribe" button found on the home page.

Prayerfully,
Rev. Mike Selleck, Interim Pastor

