



Complex world. Thoughtful church.

March 11, 2020 + 2nd Week of Lent

Dear People of God,

As these weeks unfold, news of coronavirus COVID-19 seems to be everywhere. For many there is a sense of anxiety. Our staff and leaders here at University Lutheran Church of Hope are thinking about this too. What is our current response? For what should we be ready if the spread becomes worse in the Twin Cities? How can we live faithfully and wisely in these times?

Paul Odenbach, a member of our community and a local physician, shared yesterday of what he's seeing and reflecting upon in his work. These are challenging times and much as we'd like to be in control, an outbreak like this reminds us that we are never fully in control. As Paul commented, we have the choice to "respond in fear, or to respond in humbleness and newfound grace." Flexibility and a willingness to adjust plans are essential.

**If you are sick** at all, or people in your household are sick, please stay home. If you are signed up to help with worship or hospitality, no worries: just let us know, our community can flex. At home, take time for prayer. Enjoy a favorite hymn. Read scripture. Turn to inspiration or poetry. Remember that [sermons](#) are posted online and we're experimenting with posting more of the service, potentially through our [website](#) or [Facebook](#). If you are immunocompromised or concerned, these are options to consider. Also, the 8:30am service is much smaller and contact with others can be lessened. As always: wash hands, cover coughs, and avoid touching your face. We're working to disinfect surfaces and keep our well-used church facility clean.

**In worship, we're limiting our contact.** Try sharing the peace in other ways: looking one another in the eye, bowing, a hand on your chest, the peace sign. For the offering, we'll have a plate available instead of passing it. Our communion servers will be vigilant about hand-washing and our practice of Holy Communion already uses small pottery cups so limits interaction. On Wednesdays we continue to have Lenten services at noon and 7pm, and on Sundays at 8:30am and 10:30am.

**Pastoral Care and Support.** [Pastor Barbara](#), [Pastor Jen](#), and our staff and volunteers are still available for pastoral care and concerns. Depending on health, this could be in person or by phone. Please don't hesitate to reach out. If you are choosing to stay home, let us know. That's a way of "showing up" even while not physically showing up, and it keeps our community connected. Call us if needed. Our cell numbers are listed below.

**This situation is evolving and communication is important.** If we need to adjust our worship practice, not meet for worship, etc., we will post this on our [website](#) and [Facebook](#), and we'll adjust our church voicemail (612-331-5988); we know that some rely on phone communication and we will spread the message via phone for those. We have the capacity to meet via Zoom (online audio/video conferences). If you'd like to use Zoom for a church meeting, contact a staff member.



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**Remember that these situations can be isolating**, so it's an opportunity to reach out to one another. We're the body of Christ wherever we are. Try using phone/text/email, etc. Also, we know with anxiety often comes xenophobia. For instance, we're hearing that some who are seen to be Asian are being targeted or avoided. Be mindful as you interact with friends, neighbors, and our church community.

**Where do we look for information?** The [CDC](#) has a helpful website, as does the [Minnesota Department of Health](#). The U of M is moving to online course instruction at least through the end of this month; here is the [MN Daily article](#).

**Here are some contacts that may be helpful.** The church phone number is 612-331-5988. [Pastor Jen](#) can be reached at church, cell 612-227-9673, and [jenn@ulch.org](mailto:jenn@ulch.org). [Pastor Barbara](#) can be reached at church, cell 970-901-7189, and [barbaraj@ulch.org](mailto:barbaraj@ulch.org). Nick's email is [nickt@ulch.org](mailto:nickt@ulch.org), Gayle's is [ulch@ulch.org](mailto:ulch@ulch.org), and Zach's is [zachb@ulch.org](mailto:zachb@ulch.org).

**We hold you in our prayers.** We pray for health and wisdom for care providers, leaders, those who are vulnerable, and each of us. A beloved prayer guides us:

*O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Christ's Peace,

Pastor Jen, Pastor Barbara, Zach, Nick, Gayle and our congregational leaders.