



March 13, 2020

Friends and Members of First Presbyterian Church of Normal,

As our own community and the world around us attempts to address the effects of the coronavirus (COVID-19), I want you to know how our church is seeking to ensure the safety and well-being of our family of faith. Since being declared a pandemic, the effects surrounding the prevention of the spread of the coronavirus have come at an extremely quick pace. Our neighbors have felt the effects of these safety measures as our community leaders, local universities, and businesses seek to make the most thoughtful decisions for their context. Our church is no different. I want to share with you several of the measures and changes we are taking to ensure First Presbyterian Church remains a space of sanctuary, safety, and inspiration.

- In accordance with public health guidelines and at the direction of agencies such as the Center for Disease Control (CDC), we are exercising an abundance of caution by taking additional diligence regarding the cleaning and sanitizing of our facility. We also make efforts to ensure that hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes are readily available around the church.
- Instead of passing the plates during our time of offering, our ushers will be holding the offering plates at the entrances to the sanctuary to receive offerings as you exit.
- During the Passing of the Peace within our worship services, we are encouraging all individuals to express their gratitude for each other through gestures that do not require physical contact. A friendly wave or the placing of your hand on your heart is a simple way to greet your friends and our visitors.
- The celebration of the Lord's Supper will remain an important element of our corporate worship together on the first Sunday of each month. However, in order to practice additional caution, we will be modifying our practice of receiving the bread and the cup.

We currently intend to continue gathering for worship according to our regular schedule. We will continue to listen to the guidelines of health organizations and government offices for guidance. Should our session determine to alter this plan of action, we will communicate any changes with as much urgency and clarity as possible. You are encouraged to remain home if you are experiencing a fever and persistent cough or if you are feeling ill. The health and well-being of our friends and visitors is our primary concern during this time. We urge you to follow all of the suggested practices being offered by medical professionals. This includes washing your hands more frequently, coughing and/or sneezing into your elbow, and refraining from simple actions of contact such as shaking hands.

Finally, I want to share something I offered to our session. This is not a time for panic. Instead, I believe our church and the greater Church of all believers have the burden and opportunity right now to embody a non-anxious, responsible, and compassionate presence. Our hope and faith is in the Creator of all things. That hope and faith is sealed and gives us assurance through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We have the chance now, through the urging and gifting of the Holy Spirit, to embody and share that hope and faith with our neighbors. There is no doubt that as this situation unfolds, that we will have an opportunity to care for and support our neighbors. Both as a church and as individuals. And as we have for the last 150 years, First Presbyterian Church will be ready and willing to do so.

Faithfully,

Rev. Matt Wilcox