

Dear Body of Christ known as Walnut Grove,

“Disjointed” may be one of the words that comes to mind when we think of how bodies of people are having to adjust to safe practices regarding the spread of COVID-19. In particular, when the Body of Christ can’t assemble, a major part of our identity feels like it is in crisis. Koinonia is the ancient term which describes the fellowship of gathered believers. My koinonia is out of joint!

Thank you for continuing to be the Church in these challenging days. Following Wesley’s general rules: “First, do no harm; Second, do good; and Third, stay in love with God”, here are some pieces of information for you – the best information we have at this moment. It almost goes without saying that we are all becoming accustomed to the phrase, “we will give updates as we gain more information.”

1) Worship:

- a. At this point, we have received no further directives from the Bishop regarding the cessation of public gathering. So, for this upcoming Sunday, 3/22, we will again offer a live Facebook feed at 11am on the Walnut Grove page. We’ll send out reminders on Saturday. (And our technology issues will have been resolved!) In addition, our Orange Cooperative Parish leaders are assembling a video-based worship experience which will incorporate pastors’ and lay servants’ gifts into a video available at various times on Sunday. (The appropriate link and other info will be shared Saturday as well.)
- b. Prayer Quilts – During the live Facebook feed Sunday at 11, to pray for the recipients, simply click the heart, or reply with a word or praying hands to the Facebook post which will appear Sunday morning with the names of the quilt recipients. We will tie as many knots as we get hearts and other responses. (Yes, you heard the preacher say he’d tie one on in your honor!)
- c. We will inform you immediately if there is another Conference directive on public gatherings, or will inform you early next week of our own decisions to adhere to the latest CDC recommendations.
- d. Because of interrupted rehearsal times, even if we are able to assemble for Worship on Easter, we will not be able to have our Cantata – too many rehearsals needed with too many musicians in one confined space for that to happen this year.
- e. WE WILL HAVE EASTER SUNRISE OUTSIDE! (6:36am, 4/12) We will set up a portable sound system and practice safe social-distancing in our gloriously spacious fields and fresh air!
- f. If we will need to postpone public worship for an extended period, I would like to know if you have significant experience with video editing, as we are considering creative ways to worship together while apart. Call, text or email me if “you got skillz.” (919-741-3706) hpreston@nccumc.org

2) Meetings:

- a. Amanda and I are currently becoming familiar with an App called, “Zoom.” It may be used to hold “virtual” meetings. We will send more info as we learn the program and have scheduled meetings on the horizon.
- b. Our Covenant Council will need to meet next Tuesday, 3/24, 7pm, as we have some pressing business to attend. Stay tuned as to whether we will attempt a virtual meeting,

meet in the fellowship hall or sanctuary using “social distancing”, or a combination of both.

- c. Stay tuned for how other committees will continue their work.
- d. Kudos to both Sunday School leaders and Committee chairpersons in their creativity to keep people connected through emails and telephone calls!

3) Finances:

- a. The budget still needs your support. We will send a special statement from our finance team soon detailing how you may have electronic giving options, mailing in checks, etc.
- b. People need your support. We may have church members, as well as others in our neighborhood, who experience serious financial repercussions from this health crisis. Times of urgent need bring out the best in us. Now is the time for generosity. Our Matthew 25:35 fund is set up precisely to discretely help those who need help the most.
- c. Our trustees will be adjusting our building thermostats to operate on minimal needs to be as cost-efficient as possible.

4) General Info:

- a. Amanda and I will be finding ways to keep your discipleship of Jesus Christ in growth mode. Thank you for checking and reading your email often and offering your creative ideas and service for how we can keep learning, growing and serving during these days.
- b. **DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK FOR HELP!** If you are in a high-risk category (over 65, health or immuno-compromised), we are assembling a small army of people available to do grocery shopping or other things that might help you. Please call Amanda (919-618-9559) if you **NEED** assistance, or if you are **AVAILABLE TO GIVE** assistance!
- c. If you need Pastoral care, please call me. We can talk and pray by phone. Provided we're symptom-free, we can even meet in person and practice all the safe social-distancing techniques.
- d. Look for the weekly e-Nutshell to keep connected with birthdays and all other church-wide news.
- e. Lastly, remember God's word, “Do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.” (Isaiah 41:10) We serve a God of unlimited creative power which will help us navigate these days. We serve a God of grace who helps us offer that same grace to others. We serve a God of healing which is already at work through countless, selfless health servants. And we serve a God who abundantly offers “the peace which passes understanding”.

May God bless us with even more faithfulness to the Christian walk in these days. Wherever you go, be it in person or online, represent the God of grace, generosity, mercy, justice and love.

Pastor Hunter