



Bishop Ward Urges Churches to Cease Public Worship for the Next Two Weeks

Dear United Methodist friends,

We continue to pray and witness in the name of Jesus Christ, our Great Physician, and Healer, as we receive updates regarding the spread of COVID-19 in North Carolina.

I urge you to cease public worship and other gatherings in your church through the next two weeks in order to protect your church family and the community in which you live and serve. Bishop Paul Leeland makes today this same request to the churches in Western North Carolina.

Public health leaders help us realize that we are on the cusp of a significant increase in the contagious virus. Social distancing is the most effective means of slowing the spread of the disease.

“For social distancing to be effective, it must begin early—so early that it may feel unneeded and silly. If we wait until its need is obvious, it is too late. The faith community has an important role to play in slowing the speed of disease transmission. Large gatherings of people are a petri dish for spreading the infection. For a period of time, I strongly urge our religious communities to suspend traditional services and gatherings and find other ways to practice and sustain our faith. Our witness and our example may save many lives, especially the lives of those at risk in our own congregations.” – Dr. Wes Wallace*

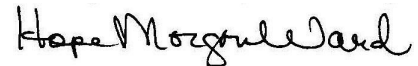
Where small groups or classes are essential to wellbeing, be vigilant as such groups meet in cleansed spaces, seated with distance between participants, with particular care for those who are older or who have health vulnerabilities.

Thank you for your creativity as we continue to strengthen the church through our prayers, our presence in expanded ways with one another, our gifts, our service, and our witness. We will share radiant examples of your ministry in this new and challenging time in order to foster creativity and to encourage one another.

May the Church of Jesus Christ rise anew with courage and creativity

in this time of challenge, shining as light in a wounded, fearful world.

With gratitude for your ministry,



Hope Morgan Ward

**Dr. Wes Wallace is an adjunct professor of emergency medicine at the School of Medicine at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. He is the medical director of State Medical Assistance Team 2, based at the University of North Carolina and a medical officer in NC-1, the federal Disaster Medical Assistance Team based in North Carolina. He is a member of University United Methodist Church in Chapel Hill.*

What this means for Walnut Grove UMC:

ALL SCHEDULED ACTIVITIES ARE CANCELED FOR THE NEXT TWO WEEKS.

Worship: I will "go live" on Facebook Sunday morning to provide an alternate, remote time of devotion/prayer and praise. (I'll send another email out Saturday night with further instructions on how to join in live or watch it later.)

Sunday School: Classes, please share prayer concerns creatively with one another via email groups, text groups and telephone calls.

Music Rehearsal groups: suspended for now; Choir and orchestra members, practice at home on your own with your Cantata rehearsal CDs and anticipate a glorious re-uniting as God's resurrection people for Easter!

Youth: Cancelled - await further instructions from Amanda.

Sunday Evening Bible Study: postponed until further notice.

Wednesday Dinners and activities: Cancelled.

Any scheduled committee meetings: await further creative meeting approaches from your chairpersons.

WGUMC Neighborhood Block Party (Formerly Family Fun Day): Rescheduled from Sunday, 3/29 to Sunday, May 31.

We will communicate via the Nutshell regarding any changes or updates.

In the meantime, thank you for following Mr. Wesley's general rule #1: Do no harm - in this case, by being cautiously proactive in helping contain the spread of this virus by voluntary quarantine, as well as by increasing your own

personal hygiene via frequent hand-washing, etc.

Thank you for your prayerful understanding. Amanda, Leigh and I will, of course, remain on-call and accessible to you by phone, text and email to help us be a vitally creative church in these days.

Grace and peace be with you all,
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