



March 18, 2020

Dear GPC Family and Friends,

I wanted to update you on where we are as a church in our response to the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) outbreak. We continue to be in prayer for those who are affected in dramatic ways. We are praying for: our older members who are isolated in nursing home facilities, for healthcare workers, for business owners, for the most financially vulnerable people in our area, for other countries and the world-wide fight against the spread of the virus. Please keep praying for GPC and our Deacons and Elders as we make decisions. All of us are trying to adjust to “social-distancing” at a break-neck speed.

In the midst of everything, we remember that God is powerful and loving, and we affirm our faith in an Almighty Savior who loves us and is watching over the whole world.

Listed below are items we want you to know about as far as church life goes, and we will communicate with you in as many ways as possible so that everyone is in the faith-loop together.

- The **very best way** to stay connected is to make sure you receive church-wide emails. If you are not currently on the “E-blast” list, please send your email to Laurie Henderson in our church office at: communications@germantownpres.org. We will also communicate via our social media platforms, such as [FaceBook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).
- All non-essential meetings/group gatherings/recreation/etc. at GPC for groups of 10 or more will be suspended until March 31, at which time we will reassess the situation. Some of our support groups (like Alcoholics Anonymous) will continue to meet.
- We are setting up most of our groups to meet virtually online through means like Zoom Conferencing and Go To Meeting. Please be on the lookout for how to plug in to daily devotionals, Sunday School classes, and more.
- The Community Room and Chapel in the Chapel Building are available for groups of nine (9) or less to meet if they cannot meet virtually online. Our cleaning staff will wipe down the Community Room and/or Chapel at the beginning of each day if it is used.
- Our office will remain open, but to protect Ann DeVere at the front desk, we will be locking the interior doors to the office so that mail/deliveries/random drop-ins don't put her at risk. She has placed a sign on the office doors and exterior doors explaining that we are confining office visits to appointments and essential business.
- Each program staff member has been charged with creating online content for their ministry areas, i.e. Anna will send out links for Children's SS lesson, Amanda is creating Instagram Live meeting rooms for youth, and more. We will make Virtual Meeting rooms available for Sunday School classes.



- We audio-livestreamed our worship service last Sunday, and we received very good feedback. We're working on providing a video livestream this week, but we will have audio no matter what.
- Susie is putting together a Care Team ministry for our most vulnerable and isolated church members.
- We are contacting our mission partners around the area to see how we can help and support them in creative ways, especially for the most economically at-risk people we serve. We do not know how long people will be adversely affected, but we know the poorest people will suffer in many ways.
- We are inviting people to maintain their generous stewardship through online giving. Here is how you can give, in addition to mailing in a check: you can text a donation to **901-295-0202**; you may give through the church's secure giving portal at: germantownpres.org/giving. You can also set up an automatic draft with your bank. The church also uses the app GivePlus, which you can download to your phone.

It is with gratitude to God that I thank you for all of the ways so many people have stepped up during this crisis. People are acting in such amazing and generous ways, and it is so moving to watch people motivated by love for God and neighbor.

As the old Irish blessing says, "Until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of His hand."

Faithfully Yours,

Will Jones



“Faith, hope, and love abide; these three; and the greatest of these is love.” (1 Corinthians 13:13)

Dear GPC family of faith,

Our faith is in the Lord, our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer of life – this we know to be true, deep in our bones and our souls. In times of stress and anxiety, we can easily shift back into our defensiveness stances of flight, fight, or freeze, forgetting that God has us, and the world, in the palm of God’s Almighty hand. These are those times when we must breathe deeply, inhaling the calm of the Holy Spirit and exhaling all anxiety and fear.

Hope is based on the premise that the Giver of all life gives to us only what is good. Hope has an openness of trust in the time and space between the prayer of hope and the answered prayer, which *will* come. The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews reminds us of the certainty of God’s promise:

When God made a promise to Abraham, because he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, saying, ‘I will surely bless you and multiply you.’ And thus Abraham, having patiently endured, obtained the promise. Human beings, of course, swear by someone greater than themselves, and an oath given as confirmation puts an end to all dispute. In the same way, when God desired to show even more clearly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it by an oath, so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God would prove false, we who have taken refuge might be strongly encouraged to seize the hope set before us. We have this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus, a forerunner on our behalf, has entered, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. (Hebrews 6:13-20)

And, love – love is the greatest of these three, and it is in love, and from love, that we are called to serve the Lord, our God, caring especially for the least and most vulnerable in our midst. The writer of 1 John reminds us of our calling to love: *For this is the message you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.* (1 John 3:11; 4:16b)

What then, do expressions of *faith, hope, and love* look like in times of uncertainty such as these? I believe they look like us, this family of God, being beacons of these three – faith, hope, and love – and beacons of light shining into all the world that seems to be anxious and fearful for the facing of these days. We are blessed to know the love of God through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and through acts of service to others, we have the opportunity to share the tremendous love that we know deep in our souls with everyone we know now, and those we will meet in the days and weeks just in front of us.

During the next few days, I am diligently working on creating something I’m calling *Circles of Care* which will be teams of “servants” that will be able to help any member during this particular time in our lives. Service will include, but isn’t limited to, personal phone calls, emails, notes, and texts messages, as well as grocery shopping and/or meal delivery. If you are someone who might be in need of a particular service, we invite you to let the church office know (901-754-5195). If you are someone who is willing to serve in these ways, please let Pastor Susie Wiggins know at: susiew@germantownpres.org.

We are a family of faith, gathered together by the power of God’s Holy Spirit for such a time as this, and it through the Spirit that we will come through these days of challenge, and will land out onto the other side where greener pastures await us, and we will do so together. I believe this to be so, and I pray this for us all. May God bless and keep you; may God’s face shine upon you and be gracious unto you; may God bless you with faith, hope, and love. Amen.

In Christ’s abiding love,
Pastor Susie Wiggins

Let your steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us, even as we hope in you. (Psalm 33:22)

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15.13)