

Dear College UMC family,

Please know I hold each of you in my prayers each day. Whether you're a parent or grandparent adjusting to children of Warren County and Wright City school districts adjusting to children out of school for the remainder of the school year, a parent or spouse or child of a loved one who is hospitalized or in a care center who you cannot go see due to the facility being on lockdown, someone whose income is significantly affected for any number of reasons, or who understandably find themselves anxious and concerned given the circumstances we are in – no matter what is on your heart, please know that my heart is with you and I long to be of what care and support I can be for you. (My contact info is at the bottom of this note.)

Earlier this week, I sent an email announcing that we were suspending all in-person worship experiences through Palm Sunday. Based on additional and more increased restrictions from the President, Governor, Center for Disease Control (CDC) and local health officials issued in the past 24 hours, we are being asked now **to suspend in-person worship services at least through Easter Sunday, April 12.**

We will resume in-person worship services when the experts tell us it is advisable to do so. And I promise you, whenever we return to worship together, we WILL celebrate Easter! It won't be on April 12, but we WILL sing and celebrate "Christ the Lord is Risen Today!"

Furthermore, I will share with the congregation that, beginning Thursday March 19, we at College UMC will adhere to the president's and CDC's recommendation to **suspend ALL in-person gatherings of 10 or more persons.** That suspension will include not just in-person worship, but ALL weddings, funerals, and ANY church or community group of 10 or more persons who utilize our facilities. Shanna has already been in touch with leaders of the twenty or so church and community groups that fall into that category of 10 or more meeting to inform them of this change in course. Please know I am mindful of the impact of this decision on all of the groups who use our building and I am so grateful for their understanding.

Also: if you are part of a small group or other ministry team of less than 10 persons, please be in touch with your leader or facilitator if you have a meeting or gathering scheduled in the next few weeks. Please urge others to do so as well. You can also call the office and Shanna is, as always, willing to help you.

And, should the recommendation of health professionals change from restrictions of 10 persons to 0, painful as that will be, we will honor that recommendation as well.

I experienced a Holy Spirit-nudge this morning when someone I love reminded me that "the church has never been about the building ... WE are the church!" While we will not be gathering for worship together in-person for a few weeks, we continue to BE the church. God calls us to relationship with one another. Please be in touch by phone with friends, neighbors, and those beloved souls who may need additional care and support. Please be open to ways you can support the neediest in our community who are particularly vulnerable right now. Please be in prayer for one another, and for the safety of all those who serve and protect us. Please remember to continue to support our church with our financial gifts as we are still in ministry together. Please be good to yourself and your loved ones. Please remember that while we are not in control, we know the One who is.

We will get through this ... together.

Blessings,
Pastor Eric
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