



March 17, 2020

Dear College United Methodist Church family—

Greetings to you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

We are all aware of news of the rapidly unfolding global health crisis related to the spread of coronavirus. As you are likely aware, on Sunday evening, Missouri Governor Mike Parson declared that in the midst of this public health emergency, that all gatherings of 50 persons or more should be suspended immediately. Bishop Bob Farr, episcopal leader of The United Methodist Church in Missouri, has asked Missouri churches to heed that declaration.

The leaders of several of our ministry teams, John Clinger (Church Council), Karen Ahlquist (Staff-Parish Relations), Don Ruble (Trustees), and Terry Carlisle (Lay Leader) take that declaration seriously and fervently believe we must follow it. In light of this emergency, we are immediately suspending in-person worship services at College United Methodist Church. **We will not hold in-person worship services on Sundays March 22 & 29 and April 5.** We will continue to review and listen to the advice of government and public health officials, and if necessary, we will extend the in-person worship suspension accordingly.

In addition to in-person worship being cancelled through April 5, the following church events scheduled to be held between now and April 5 are also cancelled: the UMW Soup/Chili Fundraiser of March 29; the Small Group Facilitators' Gathering of March 30; our choir's annual Easter concert of April 5. Additionally, the Outreach and Church Council team meetings scheduled Tuesday and Thursday of this week, respectively, are cancelled. There are small group and other meetings on the church calendar scheduled between now and April 5; please contact your group leader to verify if your group is still planning to meet. We will also suspend dedicating Easter flowers in honor or memory of loved ones as we won't be in worship these next three Sundays to receive those requests.

It breaks my heart that we have had to make this decision to suspend in-person worship and cancel the Easter concert and other special events, but we do so out of deep concern for the most vulnerable of our church and community, including the elderly and immunocompromised. For those of us who may be in a lower-risk category, we can still be carriers of the virus to more vulnerable persons. I believe the wisest course of action is always to err on the side of caution as opposed to erring on the side of taking risk that could prove harmful.

I am working with smarter folks than I about such things to find a way that we could "gather virtually" for worship each Sunday morning we are not gathered together physically in the church building. It will likely be as simple as a scripture, devotional, and prayer shared by me in video form. We would post this to our church website and our Facebook page. As those arrangements are solidified, we will pass

that information along to you. This is very much a work in progress! Also, be checking our website for additional resources – we will update those regularly.

Lastly, I want to invite each of us to remember what we CAN do in the midst of this uncertain season. We can be the heart and hands of Jesus to others. We may not be the church gathered together in worship, but we can be the church connected – that lives in relationship with one another. Be in touch with neighbors, give the most vulnerable in our church a call to convey love and support. Smile and greet the stockperson or clerk at the grocery store. Patronize local restaurants – even if you’re just doing take-out – and tip extravagantly. Don’t hoard – share. We are beacons of the Light of Christ – let His light shine through you!

And please continue to support our church with your tithes and offerings. Your financial support of College UMC is more important now than ever before. Even while we are not worshipping in-person, ministry needs continue, and financing ministry is still essential. Our Finance Team certainly understands if your income is interrupted due to this public health crisis – and we understand if you’re unable to give. But for all of us who are capable, PLEASE give generously. You can mail your contributions to the church anytime. We continue to work on online giving opportunities via our new and improved website – we’ll share more information when that becomes possible.

I am enclosing below the most recent letter from the Missouri Conference Office, sent to pastors yesterday afternoon. You’re invited to read it yourself, but I wanted to highlight the few sentences – intended as advice and encouragement for pastors – but truly, I think a good reminder for all of us: “Stay faithful. Listen to the experts. Wash your hands. Do your best. We will get through this together.”

Indeed, we will get through this together. In the meantime, I hold you and your loved ones in prayer for the safe-keeping of all of our physical, emotional, and spiritual health. I can be reached via my cell phone at (660) 888-9457 and via email at ericmooreumc@gmail.com or ericmoore@collegemethodist.org if you need to talk or be in prayer or are in need of some other support.

I feel nothing but blessed to be your pastor.

Blessings,
Pastor Eric



Missouri Governor Mike Parson [announced last night \(3/15/20\)](#) that public gatherings of 50 or more individuals should be suspended. We want to support our civic and public health leaders during this unfolding health crisis and work together to [flatten the curve](#). Bishop Farr is strongly encouraging churches not to gather together with 50 or more individuals.

The Missouri Conference of The United Methodist Church takes the health and well-being of our communities very seriously. Our team continues to monitor the updates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), medical professionals and state and local health departments related to mass gatherings and special events. Things are changing rapidly and we are trying to stay flexible and adaptable in the midst of the unknown. Bishop Farr plans to touch base with the Cabinet and the Conference staff on Wednesday of this week (3/18/20) before heading into the weekend.

Please don't forget that we continue to be the Church even when we are not gathered in communal worship. Get creative. We've pulled together some resources for you to explore ideas for worship and communal support at www.moumethodist.org/coronavirus. We will continue to update this page.

Lastly, this weekend our state witnessed a horrible mass shooting at a Springfield gas station. Five people including a police officer and a gunman have died in the shooting. Please pray for our world that is hurting. Be in

prayer for the so many people affected by this trauma and the violence that continues to plague our communities.

Bless you as you prayerfully discern how to navigate these challenging times as spiritual leaders. Bishop Farr, together with the Cabinet, is proud of the work you are doing to pastor through a difficult season. Stay faithful. Listen to the experts. Wash your hands. Do your best. We will get through this together.