

Friday, November 20, 2020

Dear College United Methodist Church family,

Greetings! I pray you and your family are healthy and well.

Earlier this week, Bishop Robert Farr sent out a letter to all United Methodist pastors and lay leaders in Missouri, strongly encouraging that in-person worship services be suspended until further notice for congregations located in counties with a critical status related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

On Thursday evening, our Church Council held its regular monthly meeting, and unanimously voted to heed the bishop's advice. **Beginning this Sunday, November 22, College United Methodist Church will suspend its in-person worship service and will be conducted online only.** Each Sunday morning until we can safely resume worshipping together again, we will post our worship service on our Facebook page and website (www.collegemethodist.org).

Additionally, the Church Council unanimously voted to close the church building for all groups, classes, meetings and other gatherings – asking that only church staff and volunteers essential to the church's operation enter the building.

Please know these decisions were not made lightly. Warren County, like virtually all counties in Missouri, is experiencing an alarming increase in COVID infections. When we resumed in-person worship on July 5, there were less than 50 COVID cases in the county; as I write this email, there are 1295 positive cases in Warren County, as well as eight deaths attributed to COVID. Please join me in praying for so many in our community who are sick or grieving or otherwise affected by the impact of the pandemic on their family's livelihoods, and praying for those who are on the front lines caring for those in need.

I fully recognize that our worshipping physically apart from one another during Thanksgiving, Advent, and Christmas seasons seems unimaginable, and these normally joyous times will be difficult for individuals, families, and our community as a whole. But friends, I invite us to remember who and whose we are: as the bishop said, "We are a people of relentless hope in God in times of despair. Do not waiver in your faith in the promise of Jesus."

I give God thanks for you and for your dedication to the ministry of College United Methodist Church that continues always. Our building may be temporarily closed – but the church is NOT closed ... Beloved, WE are the church!

And as we soon turn our hearts to Advent, the season of watching and waiting, may we look forward together to brighter days. We will get through this together.

Blessings,
Pastor Eric