

# CPMC Conference Ministers and Congregational Pastors

Wednesday, March 18, 2020

- It can be hard for congregations to act quickly, even though the recommendations for public gatherings have been changing rapidly.
  - This creates exhaustion and highlights the need for self-care so pastors are equipped to care for others.
  - To relieve some of the burden, one congregation assembled a 4-person team to create guidelines for the congregation and empowered them to make decisions via email and phone/text.
- Many of our churches were together in person on March 15, but only one plans to hold in-person services on the 22<sup>nd</sup>.
  - The congregation that plans to meet on March 22 will also live-stream; they have appointed one person to open and close the doors so not everyone has to touch the door handle.
- Most of us are utilizing existing live-stream options, Zoom, Facebook Live, or are uploading videos of sermons to YouTube.
  - Some are coordinating resources with other local congregations (Mennonite and other denominations).
  - Band-width is a limitation to live-streaming in some areas; so is having the right people available to do the tech work.
  - Some platforms are more conducive to worshipping as a community than others; singing is a challenge; so is not being able to look into each other's faces as we worship; interactive platforms allow people to pray for one another.
  - Some congregations are continuing with sermons and others are offering directions for reflection on scripture.
- For some of us, online worship isn't feasible because not everyone has internet access at home.
  - Other options include the "One Call Now" app for sharing prayer concerns; mailing or hand-delivering reflections on scripture, prayer concerns, announcements, and even jokes!
- While it may not be our first concern, we all are mindful that we still have expenses and bills to pay.
  - We are inviting people to send offerings by mail, drop them off at the church, or give online; we've even heard of a church that invited giving by smartphone via a QR code.
  - Treasurers could use mobile depositing if they're staying close to home.
- Many congregations are conducting committee meetings virtually.
- Pastoral care requires patience and creativity
  - We're making a lot more phone calls and sending lots of texts these days.
  - Some plan to stand outside on the front porch or visit with people through windows at care centers. Please, please call ahead first!
  - Face Time is another good way many people already use to keep in touch.
  - We may need to rely on nursing home/hospital chaplains when our own access is restricted.
  - Maybe children could write, draw, color greetings to be mailed to residents in care homes; maybe we could all write more letters!

- Sunday school classes and small groups could be encouraged to continue virtual gatherings.
- We're trying to address some other concerns as well –
  - Many people's incomes have or will be impacted. We're trying to identify them and offer ways to help.
  - Maybe we can learn from a food pantry that created two Google forms, one for requesting help and one for offering resources to others, remembering that this is complicated because getting resources where they need to go takes considerable coordination.
  - Many day-care centers and schools are closed, but some parents still need to work. One congregation is implementing small-scale childcare using adults who've already been screened to work with children.
- Some other ideas CPMC staff have become aware of:
  - Some churches are setting up one-hour time slots for pastors to be available via Zoom for anyone who wants to talk.
  - Others are using Zoom to invite congregants to chat with one another and pray for each other.
  - One congregation is practicing mutuality by making sure everyone not only gets a phone call asking how they're doing, but also making sure that each person gets to make a phone call asking someone else how they're doing.
  - Amanda encourages everyone to try new things! It's ok if things don't work out perfectly. Try another option next week. Take this opportunity to explore and practice new ways of ministering. Collaborate with others. Be playful in this time of stress.