

Church update for March 18, 2020

Hey Everyone,

This is Pastor Andy. It is my plan to keep you an updated regularly on what is going on in the church and/or the community. I'll also include a little devotional and lead you in prayer. I don't plan on doing this every day. At first, I thought about doing something daily, but the more I thought about it, the more I thought that my updates could become stale. So, I'll probably give you an update once a week or so, on Wednesday mornings. I will also continue to post announcements on the Church Facebook page throughout the week. I also want to hear from all of you about ways that I can reach people who don't have internet, especially on Sunday mornings. I am also in the process of creating a list of people to stay in contact with during this time. If you think of someone who could use a phone call, please let me know. All I need is a name and a phone number. One more thing, I would like to hear from you about your prayer requests. Please feel free to email me, call me, message me, or text me with your prayer requests. We will continue to send out these prayer requests via our prayer chain.

Here are the community announcements that I'm familiar with:

1. We are no longer under a boil order or water restrictions. You can now cook and clean with your tap water. If you didn't get your bottled water from American Water at City Hall, I believe you are too late. I believe they were taking back the water the morning on March 17, 2020.
2. You probably already noticed that all restaurants and bars are closed for dine in customers, per state orders. I believe that most restaurants in Farmington are set up to do deliveries, drive thru's, or curbside pick up. Most of them are asking that you call in your order ahead of time. You do what you feel comfortable with, and especially consider not going out if you feel sick. That said, this would be a good way to support our local businesses during this crisis.

Here are some church announcements

1. Worship remains cancelled through the month of March. Session and I will continue to evaluate things as we continue to get updates from the experts. However, I still plan to post my sermon and some prayers on Facebook live every Sunday morning. Please feel free to share that with anyone.
2. All choir practices, committee meetings, and all church-based events remain cancelled through the month of March.
3. We have 20 copies of the "These Days" devotional in the office. If you know someone who doesn't have internet and needs a devotional, please either call me or come by and pick one up and take it to them.

4. I continue to keep my regular office hours, which are Mondays and Tuesdays from 9:30-12:00pm and Wednesdays and Thursdays from 1:00pm-5:00pm. Please feel free to stop by. Please note that I will not be shaking hands for the time being.

This concludes all the announcements I have right now.

Scripture Lesson

Let us now turn our attention to God's Word. My Scripture passage for today is Psalm 121. I will be reading from the Common English Bible. Listen for the Word of the Lord for you today.

- "I raise my eyes toward the mountains. Where will my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the maker of heaven and earth. God won't let your foot slip. Your protector won't fall asleep on the job. No! Israel's protector never sleeps or rests! The LORD is your protector; the LORD is your shade right beside you. The sun won't strike you during the day; neither will the moon at night. The LORD will protect you from all evil; God will protect your very life. The LORD will protect you on your journeys—whether going or coming – from now until forever from now."

Meditation

Today's passage from Psalm 121 was written a pilgrim leader. It is a song or poem that was likely written for people as they made their pilgrimage to Jerusalem to worship God in the Holy Temple. As someone who has been on a religious pilgrimage years ago, I know exactly what it's like to be walking with a group of people towards a spiritual destination. I know what it's like to wonder if I'm going to make it to my pilgrimage sight or if my body is going to give out first. I know what it's like to be walking up a mountain and feeling that the only thing that is going to get me through these hills and mountains is God. Joan Scott, on their website, "The Timeless Psalms," writes about trusting in God, especially in the times when we are weak and tired and worried. She writes, "The protective "shade" which God offered and continues to offer us was not an insurance policy against disaster; rather it is God's abiding presence that enables any of us to live with trauma and disaster - as when "bad things" happen to people - and who triumph over adversity, because they trust in the guidance of their Watching and Sheltering God." I love that idea of a God who is abiding with us, especially in times of trauma and disaster. In a way, all of us are on a religious pilgrimage right now as a people. We are journey in uncharted territories, unsure of what is going to happen, unsure when we will make it through our journey, worried that we are going to run out of supplies. Yes, I like this image of being on a religious pilgrimage right now.

Our city, county, state, country, and world are in states of emergency over the Corona Virus. A lot of us are worried about what is going to happen. Some of us might be thinking that everyone's losing their minds over this. I admit that I am getting nervous, just like everyone else. And when I'm nervous, I turn to Scriptures for guidance. Psalm 121 reminds us that when we are on our journey, we can turn our gaze upon God, and put our trust in God, who is our help and protector. Know that we are not alone in this

time. We have each other. We have our Church family. And we have God. You are not alone. Amen.

Closing Prayer

Let us close with prayer. These words are not my own. This is a prayer written by Rev. Jill Duffield, editor of the Presbyterian Outlook. She posted this on their website on March 9, 2020. Let us pray,

God of all that is seen and unseen, our anxiety rises as the invisible coronavirus spreads. We worry about the impact of this illness on healthcare workers, older adults, those already physically fragile, the vulnerable among us and people whose livelihoods are tied to the regular movement of people and commerce. We recognize in this moment how inextricably connected we are to one another and we hope that this unmistakable realization will shape all our actions in ways that foster the common good, increase compassion and expand communal care. As people in positions of leadership in religious communities, educational institutions, hospitals, government and local communities face difficult choices about how to address the complex challenges this virus brings, grant them wisdom and courage. Knowing that we are flawed and that our knowledge is incomplete, make us humble in our judgment, patient with one another, and gracious toward those tasked with the burden of making hard decisions in the days ahead. Bring healing to the sick, strength to the caregivers, comfort to those who mourn, peace to those in quarantine and mercy to all of your beloved creation. Amen.

Thanks for tuning in for my mid-week devotional. Please take care of yourselves. Please call me if you need anything. God's peace and love and protection be with you all this day and every day. Amen.