

Dear Members and Friends of Newton Presbyterian Church,

Since Sunday, the Session has met and deliberated over how to respond spiritually and effectively to the coronavirus pandemic that the World Health Organization has declared, given our situation and Governor Baker's declaration of a state of emergency. One of the most significant recommendations from public health officials is to avoid congregating in numbers. We deliberated about this, attempting to balance public health and safety concerns and the health of those who attend our worship services, and the spiritual needs of believers at this time.

After weighing several possibilities, the Session has made the following decisions. First, we are suspending on-site worship services for Newton Presbyterian Church for the rest of March, including our scheduled service of Prayer and Penitence on March 19th. We are also suspending other meetings, such as Women's Life Group.

Second, we are communicating this decision to the others who use our facilities, and commending their leadership to take up these issues with both the Spirit's guidance and the best medical guidance that national, state, and local authorities can provide. The Session will meet later this month to make further decisions about Holy Week observances.

We recognize that our body of believers depends upon the spiritual nourishment that we receive from weekly worship. Thus, we are going to take on a new experiment. We will probably be using Twitch, an application that allows for simultaneous streaming of the worship service. More details on this are coming later this week. Further, we are setting up online options for making our tithes and offerings. We still will, of course, receive checks through the mail. The Session recognizes that this new option in no way replaces the closeness that meeting each other face to face provides – so that we can see Christ in each other's face, and hear the warm words of encouragement as we live out Christ's call. But we believe that this is the prudent course that may allow the quickest recovery for both Newton Presbyterian Church and the wider society.

We ask the members and friends for a few things at this time of struggle. First, we ask you to set aside some time each day to pray. Pray for the health care workers who are in danger of being overwhelmed. Pray for the nation and the world as we face this virus. Pray for the Session as it continues to monitor and discern the best path at this time. Second, if you have questions or concerns or ideas, we ask you to reach out to the members of Session – their names and e-mails are included at the bottom of this e-mail. Finally, we ask that you join with us in a spirit of discovery – perhaps God will show us new manners of discipleship through this time of trial that lead us to new depths of faith.

In Christ's mercy,

RW

Ward Holder – wholder@anselm.edu

Mark Saunders - miataman1@comcast.net

Kathy Barnes - kathy.barnes.newton@gmail.com

Anita Ulloa - aniulloa@gmail.com

Dave Penn - projectdrum2k3@yahoo.com

Rev. Dr. R. Ward Holder
Temporary Pastor
Newton Presbyterian Church
Newton, Massachusetts
(781)888-1691