



# Court Street United Methodist Church

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*... an imperfect people learning to love perfectly, discovering with our neighbors hope and wholeness through Jesus Christ.*

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Thursday, March 19, 2020

Dear Members and Friends of Court Street United Methodist Church,

*Therefore, my [siblings in Christ] whom I love and miss, who are my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord. ... Don't be anxious about anything; rather, bring up all of your requests to God in your prayers and petitions, along with giving thanks. Then the peace of God that exceeds all understanding will keep your hearts and minds safe in Christ Jesus.*

~ Philippians 4:1, 6-7, Common English Bible

I've always appreciated the ways in which the Apostle Paul, in his many letters, has a way of drawing close to those who are so far away. Perhaps we can learn much from Paul in these days of physical distancing. Though he is not near he continues to encourage his readers and remind them to draw near to God in all the anxious moments of life.

Friends, we are living in anxious days. There is much to read about the COVID-19 pandemic. We wonder what sources of information we can trust. As your pastor, I not only look to God but also to the counsel of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the World Health Organization (WHO), our Bishop, and the President's Coronavirus Task Force. With the news changing rapidly about the spread and what precautions to take, it would be easy to be anxious or give in to a spirit of fear. With all the resources in our toolkit we are able to be proactive. You may already know that I err on the side of caution. I do so because you are precious not only to God but also to me. When I address you as Dear Ones I mean it. Your safety and well-being is of the utmost concern to me. Just as are the sheep to the shepherd. As we live into our vision we realize that discovering with our neighbors hope and wholeness through Jesus Christ means we do uncomfortable things and make hard decisions for the benefit of the greater good.

The Administrative Board met on Monday, March 16, 2020. Barb Reuter, with her background at the Department of Health and Senior Services and her experience in crisis preparedness and response, was invited to share in our conversations. We heeded the advice of those noted above and came to the conclusion that it is in the best interest of our congregation and the community groups who use our building to suspend all activities, events, weddings, and funerals with attendance greater than 10 beginning immediately and continuing through the CDC-recommended 8-week time frame. This time-frame takes us through Sunday, May 10, 2020. With the recommendations changing daily, the Administrative Board will revisit and adjust these precautions and time-frames as needed. This decision impacts our ministries in the following ways:

- ✦ **The Office:** Effective Tuesday, March 17, 2020 our offices are closed to the public. If you should need to come to the church for any reason please call the office first to make arrangements.
- ✦ **Ministries:** We will continue to serve our community through The Food Pantry @ Court Street and Baby Grace with adapted services to protect both our volunteers and clients. The exercise room and Walk with

Ease programs are now both suspended through May 10th.

- ✦ **Stewardship:** We are a generous congregation. Our generosity is vital at this time. Even though we will not be meeting for worship our ministries will continue in new and creative ways. We will still accumulate the cost of operation to maintain the building and property. In addition, our staff are working even harder to adapt to a steep learning curve on doing ministry when a pandemic means we can no longer do business as usual. We encourage you to mail your pledges and offerings to the church (719 Court St., Fulton, MO 65251) or donate through the donation portal on our website ([www.courtumc.org](http://www.courtumc.org) then click on "Give"). We are working on another means of making it easy to contribute to the congregation's ministry. Stay tuned for more information. Those who have volunteered their time to count the money may continue to do so. Please contact the office to schedule a time. There will be additional precautions implemented that will be explained to those volunteers.
- ✦ **Worship:** This decision greatly impacts our ability to worship together. Not only that, but we will miss being together for those deep moments of Holy Week and the great joy of Easter. The staff have been brainstorming how we might continue to worship together. To that end we invite you to join us for worship on the new YouTube channel shared between Court Street and Shiloh UMCs (link below). Our virtual worship gathering will go live at 10 a.m. on Sunday mornings. We will make available, in advance, a bulletin and weekly Going Deeper worksheet. You may print those at your convenience. We would like to fill our pews with your pictures. We ask that you send us a selfie or your favorite picture that we might print and place in the pews. This will ensure that we aren't leading worship in an empty sanctuary. Rather, your pictures will remind us that you are worshiping with us in spirit. We are scheduled to have communion on Sunday, March 29. We are ordering sealed communion cups and wafers that will be distributed to the home of each member and friend by a group of volunteers. In an effort to practice appropriate physical distancing the individual cup and wafer set will be placed in a bag and left at your door. Please contact the office as soon as you are able to let us know if you would like to receive one of these kits.
- ✦ **Cleaning:** I have been in touch with Brian Willis of Adamah Cleaning, LLC, our custodial service. He will be providing us with spray bottles of a cleaning solution that has been formulated to target COVID-19. Our custodial crew is with us once a week to thoroughly clean the building as well as The Rock. We will be able to use the cleaning agent in the spray bottles to sanitize surfaces between those cleanings.

As we continue to live together but so far apart I pray we will draw closer to one another. Knowing that isolation can lead to depression and loneliness, how can we creatively bridge the distance between us? How can we best care for each other? How can we best care for our community? How can we best care for the kin-dom of God? May we remember that in the first century the church was about the people of God not about the buildings in which they met. These chaotic days during which we aren't able to meet in a building that is precious to us, may we be reminded that our strength lies in our relationships. May we extend grace to both ourselves and others remembering that it is only through God's grace that we are redeemed. When fear, anger, hunger, loneliness, or exhaustion threaten to overtake you be sure to practice a holy pause. Stop whatever you're doing and take a long deep breath. Remember the continuing story of creation in which we are told God shaped the first human from the dust of the earth and then breathed into it the breath of life. As you take a deep cleansing breath, may God breathe new life into you. We've got this, Dear Ones, because God's got this. And until we meet each other face-to-face,

May God's grace and peace enfold your spirit,



Rev. Rebecca "R<sup>2</sup>" Dunger Peak

## **Important Links:**

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Court Street & Shiloh United Methodist Churches YouTube Channel

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCrYU-EowoJgCN\\_SKSyol1og?view\\_as=subscriber](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCrYU-EowoJgCN_SKSyol1og?view_as=subscriber)

Bishop Farr's COVID-19 Letter and Video:

<https://www.moumethodist.org/newsdetail/the-church-the-coronavirus-covid-19-13533497>

2020 General Conference Postponed

<https://www.unitedmethodistbishops.org/newsdetail/umc-general-conference-2020-postponed-13533796>

Missouri Conference of the UMC COVID-19 + Church FAQs

<https://www.moumethodist.org/coronavirus-faq>

Missouri Conference of the UMC COVID-19 Updates & Resources

<https://www.moumethodist.org/Coronavirus>