

Friday, March 20th, 2020

Dear Living Hope Kuna UMC,

This afternoon I participated in a video call with over 20 of my pastoral colleagues throughout the Sage District, which includes all the United Methodist churches east of La Grande, OR, and all of Idaho. Part of our conversation focused on the challenges we have been facing.

It was comforting to discover that I am not the only pastor that has been feeling anxiety during the past few days, and that there are others who have been struggling to use new-to-them technology. Something else that was shared was that we all felt a need to keep in communication with both our congregations and with each other.

One of the questions that was asked was “How much longer until we can worship together again?” I am guessing you are asking that same question. To be clear, our worship for this Sunday, March 22nd, has been cancelled. The Bishop has indicated that she will make a decision regarding further actions by next Tuesday, March 24th. When I receive that information I will immediately pass it along to you. The Bishop also shared that though she has not made any final determination, *“It is likely that I will extend the suspension of worship through at least Easter Sunday, April 12th, 2020, and perhaps beyond, so be prepared for this possibility.”*

How do we prepare for this possibility? I want to share a comment that was made during this afternoon’s call, though I cannot remember who said it. We prepare by learning to love each other in new ways. These “new ways” include one congregation who was preparing to utilize a drive-in theater for worship, and another who had purchased an inexpensive FM radio transmitter capable of broadcasting a radio signal for 1-2 blocks. They plan to encourage their membership to park in the church parking lot on Sunday mornings and listen to their church worship service from their cars.

I will be posting a worship service for this Sunday, March 22nd, on the church Facebook page, (Kuna United Methodist Church – Living Hope) that should be available to be viewed by 8:00 AM Sunday morning. This has seemed to me to be the best way to reach the most people. I realize that not everyone has a presence on Facebook, and some have no online presence at all. I share the concern that

using the Facebook platform still leaves some persons out of the loop. If you have suggestions regarding how we can overcome this, please let me know.

I have something else I want to ask of you. Will you all please choose one person from our congregation and give them a phone call sometime this weekend and check-in about how they are doing? Please ask them if they have any needs that the church might be able to provide for, if there is some way that the church can assist them. Then, if a need is identified, will you communicate that information to me? If you want to call two persons, please do!

I want to close with a prayer that our District Superintendent used to end this afternoon's conference call. The prayer comes from *Thoughts in Solitude*, by Thomas Merton. "My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please You does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this You will lead me by the right road though I may know nothing about it. Therefore I will trust You always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for You are ever with me, and You will never leave me to face my perils alone.

Please know that I am praying for you and I welcome your prayers.

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