

GRACE APRIL NEWSLETTER 2020

Administrative Council met last night (March 17) to determine our way forward in the context of the COVID-19 virus. We also had conversation about ways to be in ministry with our congregation and community during this time. In summary:

1. Directions change quickly and frequently. We will not be creating a newsletter for the month of April. We figure mailing should get us to at least April 3. Expect another one prior to Easter.

2. **All gatherings for worship, learning, eating, praying, deciding are CANCELLED until April 11... and probably beyond that.** (But I hold off hope to do SOMETHing Eastery!)

The sanctuary and chapel will be open during office hours and Sunday mornings (9:00 - 11:00 am) for individual prayer time so you may come and go as you wish. Pastor Paul will be available Sunday mornings, but **we will NOT “congregate” in bunches or have corporate worship on Sunday mornings or Wednesday evenings.** If you're a musician and want to play or sing at any time, great.

3. At least weekly, Pastor Paul will record a message that will be linked on our church website and Facebook page. It will be there for your 9:30 a.m. Sunday morning viewing. We will also submit something to put on the SMU channel and on the Catch the Spirit broadcast on KICD. The SMU services are aired on channel 3 Wednesdays at 7:00 pm and Thursdays @ 10:00 am. The KICD broadcast is aired on 102.5 AM station Sundays @ 9:07 am.

4. This first newsletter we will mail to everyone on our mailing list and the subsequent newsletters will go out digitally to anyone who has email; and USPS mail to those without email. Even if you've previously said you didn't want email from the church, we've added all emails to a new, temporary group we will use until we are past this season of coronavirus. If you do not want to receive regular emails, you may unsubscribe.

5. As a church called to love, we will do what we can to care for persons in the congregation and community. We encourage you to look out for your neighbors and others within the congregation and to do what you are able. You could use the sample note we've included to make your own neighborly 'care card.' Make copies and pass them out to neighbors; those you know and those you don't yet know!

SAMPLE NOTE:

Dear Neighbor,

I am aware of the present concern that has accompanied the potential spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19). I am reaching out to let you know I am willing to assist or serve you, or someone you know.

I attend Grace United Methodist Church. We're working to provide help to anyone in need, especially neighbors! Please don't hesitate to contact me if you need anything, such as...

Going to the grocery store

Getting essential items

Bringing a meal

Just need to talk

Prayer

Or...??

Contact me using the information below. As followers of Jesus, it is our delight to serve our neighbors with the love and compassion of Jesus Christ.

My Contact Information:

6. Grace is putting together lists of people willing to help with phone calls, mailings, errands, etc. **Sign up through the church website (spencergumc.com) or contact the church office at 262-5970.**

If you are low-risk and not one of those especially susceptible to this virus and would be willing to assist those in need, please let us know.

Some of our members do not have internet access. If you would be willing to be a phone contact for one or more of these households to convey information and offer support, please contact the office.

If you are isolated, for any reason, and/or need assistance with getting food or personal items, please contact the church office at 712-262-5970 or office@spencergumc.com.

7. The church office continues to be open regular office hours (Monday – Thursday; 8:00 am – 4:30 pm; and Friday 8:00 am – 1:00 pm). The only entrance unlocked is the one by the office on 4th Street. If you are feeling well [physically] you are welcome to stop by for conversation, prayer, whatever. We will also remain available to neighbors in need. (*We encourage use of the sanitizer coming in and going out of the building and to practice social distancing of the recommended 6 feet.*)

8. Grace Church continues to have financial obligations to meet. Your continued generosity makes ministry possible at Grace UMC. That ministry is now needed desperately. You can give online at <http://www.spencergumc.com/give.php> or send your offering to Grace UMC, 311 2nd Ave W, Spencer.

9. Local funeral directors are following guidelines provided by the CDC and Iowa Funeral Directors Association. Area pastors support their action. That means for the time being, funerals will be immediate family only. Large gatherings of Celebration of Life will not be held.

10. In Romans 8, the apostle Paul tells us nothing can separate us from the love of God. Not famine nor nakedness nor peril nor sword—and certainly not COVID-19. God is with us individually and as a faith community, and we will get through this time together by embodying God's love for one another.

It is ironic that we are in the middle of The Walk, a series teaching and encouraging the practice of corporate AND individual spiritual disciplines!! This is a time to put those personal disciplines to work!!

Even if you've not participated in The Walk, the videos are available online: <https://tinyurl.com/wlltdqg> (You might have to copy and paste to get it to work.)

During the small group study of The Walk, Adam Hamilton challenged us to draw closer to God by utilizing these simple spiritual practices on our own and in community.

- Pray five times a day (morning, meals, & bedtime) and worship weekly.
- Read five verses of the Bible daily (starting with the Gospels) and study the Bible in a small group.
- Practice five acts of intentional kindness a week and serve with others.
- Extend five acts of generosity toward others each month

and give generously to God through the church.

- Let others know you are a Christian and invite five people to church each year.
- The numbers aren't what's important. Making these spiritual practices a part of your daily routine IS what's important. **Will YOU accept the CHALLENGE?**

11. Prayer awakens our mind and spirit. Beware that if you pray for guidance how you cant be helpful for the work of Jesus, you might get a response!! Never underestimate the power of prayer.

12. Pray for decision-makers, essential workers, medical workers, grocers, the quarantined, isolated and ill.

13. The kingdom of God is among us, even in a pandemic. I saw someone list all the things that are **NOT** canceled: love, neighborly care, prayer, family time, long walks, hope, music, dance, hugging your children and lover, kindness, family meals together...

*Sweet hour of prayer! Sweet hour of prayer!
That calls us from a world of care,
And bids me at my Father's throne
Make all my wants and wishes known.*

*In seasons of distress and grief;
My soul has often found relief,
And oft escaped the tempter's snare
By thy return, sweet hour of prayer!*



Grace United Methodist Church

311 2nd Ave West • Spencer, Iowa 51301
(712) 262-5970 • www.spencergumc.com
office@spencergumc.com

Pastor Paul Frederiksen

pastorpaul@spencergumc.com

Ministry Contacts:

Ad Council: Cyndi O'Hara

Staff Parish: Mitch McCann

Finance: Dennis Spooner

Trustee: Gary Small

Lay Leaders: John Rahn & Cyndi O'Hara

Missions: Gina Kohrs

Children's Ministry:

Lisa Elliott & Sheryl Larson

Discipleship Coordinator: Jane Moen

Youth: Veronica Studer

UMW: Sandy Heerd

UMM: Brad Johnson

Stewardship: John Rahn

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