*Pastors, we are sharing this letter with you as an example for connecting and communicating with your congregation about current ministry, what is available to members and friends of the congregation and the needs of the church. Please customize your letter according to your needs. Our hope is that this will help you inform and inspire those involved in your church’s ministries. Thank you, Chuck Coblentz, for sharing this letter.*

Wednesday, April 1, 2020

Dear Friends,

Grace to you and peace. As you are only too aware, so many of the things we’ve taken for granted all our lives have become more limited or eliminated altogether as united we do battle against the spread of the deadly COVID-19.

On behalf of (Church name) UMC Church Council and Church Staff, I want to thank each and every one of you for your overwhelming support and cooperation as we offer the ministry of the church in this time of social distancing. Although we may be physically separated, it is our goal to remain spiritually close and available to one another*.* “Blest be the Tie!” In order to accomplish that we’re doing the following:

* Livestreaming a weekly worship service at (time), Sundays on Facebook (or another platform) website address here. We encourage you share our broadcasts with friends and family; *it’s a great way to do evangelism!* For instance, our two services have had over (enter number) views! If you want to see a service live, just “friend” the church on Facebook, or I will send you a link to the worship service via email that you can open any time.
* We’ll also be putting out weekly videos on Facebook and emails featuring Bible study, devotions and updates on ministry and church business. As soon as we get a set schedule, we’ll let you know!
* Although they’re not meeting as a group, our prayer warriors remain fully operational! If you have a prayer request, call the church or me and we’ll pass your concern to them.
* Visit the GNJ website at gnjumc.org for more resources like Rev. Gina Yeske’s 15-minute prayer session at 8:30 a.m. every weekday morning on Facebook Live or technical training sessions that will make online worship easier and more engaging.

So that we are able to continue these wonderful things, we need to continue our financial giving throughout the crisis. We’ve included a page in this mailing that offers helpful options on giving to our church.

Finally, please call me at any time if you or someone you know has a pressing need, or if you simply want to talk! Although we are “socially distanced” from one another, *we need not feel isolated!* We are, after all, one body, the church of Jesus Christ, and by staying together we will emerge victorious!

Last week I participated in a conference call with our District Superintendent, (name), and other pastors. We affirmed that this is new for all of us, so please bear with us as we strive to serve you and all of God’s people. There are several important changes in our day to day ministry that I need to share with you as we do our best to stem the spread of the virus. Here’s what our Conference is recommending for the time being:

* All in-person church activities that involve 10 or more people are suspended.
* Funerals or memorial services held at the church will need to be postponed until a later date. Most funeral homes are limiting the number of people who can attend a viewing or interment.
* The church will not be able to host any additional services or activities, such as weddings, birthdays, etc., until the crisis passes.
* Hospital and home visitations by all pastors are suspended. Most hospitals and nursing homes, etc. are forbidding visits altogether, and for obvious reason, in-home pastoral visits may endanger anyone involved. Remember, just because a person is asymptomatic, does not mean he or she is virus-free!

These are strange times we are living in, but “this too shall pass!” As I pray for you, I ask that you pray for me and all pastors as well, as together we make our way through this dense wilderness. With God’s help we will not fail!

Your Servant in Christ,