

Peace to you in our Lord Jesus Christ!

We are living in a highly anxious time right now with the spread of the COVID-19 virus. With more cases being confirmed this morning in Guilderland and with the actions taken by the state and local government to encourage social distancing, Vice President of the Consistory, Joan Healey, and I have decided to act on behalf of consistory to cancel worship for the next two weeks. The consistory will reconsider after that time whether or not worship shall continue on Sunday, March 29. There will be opportunities to connect for worship and prayer and simple fellowship via an online platform. More details on worship are below.

We are deciding to act out with an abundance of caution out of love for those in our congregation and the wider community. The wisdom of health professionals at this moment in time seem to be encouraging social distancing., and we recognize that we much of our community is part of the population that is at highest risk for contracting the virus. It seems that the best way to care for our neighbors is not to gather and take the necessary precautions to slow the spread of the virus.

I want to share these encouraging words of a colleague of mine to remind us to care for one another and connect as we are able:

- One - keep calm. Remember that this, too, shall pass. We place our trust in the love and goodness of our God, and that is where our ultimate hope lies.
- Two - check in on our more vulnerable friends, family, and community members. This disease is especially concerning for the elderly and immunocompromised. These folks will feel especially anxious to leave their homes for simple things, like picking up groceries. Perhaps those of us who are less at risk can offer to make runs to the grocery store or pharmacy. This is a wonderful opportunity to show our love of neighbor.
- Three - avoid spreading information that has not been source-checked. I have seen a lot of misinformation being shared on social media. This does more to fuel fear and confusion than anything. If you are not certain that an article or quote comes from a medical professional, consider not passing it along or posting to your Facebook page. This way we can all participate in creating safe, accurate places online for everyone.

Let us take care in these difficult times - of ourselves and of one another. Please know that I am available for any concerns or questions you may have. Perhaps you just need someone to pray with you - in person or over the phone. I am here. Just let me know.

Please do reach out if you need assistance in accessing resources or someone to talk or pray with. The consistory and I will also be working on setting up a network of care that we might check in with one another and provide support if necessary.

As for worship, I am currently looking into setting up the video conferencing platform Zoom so that those who are able might connect with each other online. On Sunday morning, we will have a simple worship service and space to check in with one another. Throughout the week, I am looking at setting up a specific time to also join together for mutual support and prayer. If you would like to join our online worship space, I will send out an invitation to join via the prayer chain email. If you are not on this email list, please email hrchurchprayer@gmail.com to join the list. There is also an option to call in through the Zoom platform.

Let us be mindful of those who do not have access to the technology to access this worship opportunity. Bringing a laptop, tablet, or phone to someone without, and sharing in the worship experience with them is a wonderful way to maintain congregational community in this unusual time.

I also encourage you to continue your regular giving to the church. Contributions can be mailed to the church. We are also looking into online giving options, and if we move forward information for giving digitally will be shared.

Peace to you in this uncertain time.

Rev. Lindsey De Kruif
Minister of Word and Sacrament