Dear friends in Christ,

This week has been difficult for many of us as all of humankind faces a pandemic. Our Session has been in prayerful discernment about how we can best meet the needs of our community. Jesus said, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind and love your neighbor as yourself (Matt. 22:37-39).” In these uncertain times, it has been challenging to know exactly how to do that.

The personal care recommendations from our family doctors are very good advice:  frequently wash your hands and wipe off other familiar surfaces; do elbow bumps but don’t shake hands. Airborne viruses easily travel our usual personal space, so take a step back.

These practices are not enough.  Jesus is often clear: - Mathew 25:45, to “protect the least of us”!  There are times when we choose to act collectively: to help our kids, the poor of the community, St Jude and the list goes on.  The COVID -19 virus is a new and largely unknown health challenge.  All of our groups must work as one. The First Presbyterian Church of Decatur joins with all our community groups, from schools, to restaurants, to libraries, to Human Services, etc., by taking actions that provide maximum support for those of us most at risk: our diabetic, elderly, and immunologically challenged friends and neighbors.  The solution requires extraordinary personal, community, national, and international actions.

We will gather this Sunday for worship, with these measures in place:

* Sunday School, Youth Group, and Coffee with Katie will be cancelled.
* The Session will hold an emergency meeting at 9:00am to address concerns.
* Use the hand sanitizers at the entrances as you come and go.
* Bump knuckles or elbows instead of shaking hands or hugs.
* Sit semi separated especially if out of town family are with you.
* We will use printed copies of all music and Scripture readings.
* We will pass the peace of Christ using sign language to avoid physical contact.
* Leave your offering in the collection plates at the front or back, or use online giving.
* The service will be broadcasted through Facebook Live, watch our Facebook page for details on how to join us.

These suggestions are likely to change as needed to protect “the least of these” and ourselves.

This is the recommendation of your Session

Dr. Chuck Cubbage, Ph.D.

Environmental epidemiologist in public health

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