



Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church

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March 6, 2020

Dear Friends,

As we remain committed to praying for those affected by the coronavirus, we also remain committed to keeping you up to date on the precautions MAPC is taking. We continue to monitor all city information, as well as receiving the most up to date developments from our members with expertise in situations such as this. We encourage you to keep educating yourself, as well. The New York City Health Department's [coronavirus site](#) continues to be a reliable resource. Copies of my first letter to the congregation are available in hard copy at MAPC. It is also available [online](#). Updates this week are included below.

In Worship

These are the precautions we are taking in worship:

- During the Passing of the Peace, we will request that everyone exchange only verbal greetings and expressions of peace. This will also be our practice at the end of worship when the clergy greet you in the Narthex.
- Pew Pads, typically used to record attendance, will be removed from the Sanctuary. They will be cleaned and stored until such a time that these precautions are no longer necessary.
- Children's Worship will continue. Rest assured that all participants will wash their hands with soap before snacks are distributed. All snacks are individually pre-packaged. Children's Worship Bags have been laundered and all hard surfaces inside have been disinfected.
- We will continue celebrating the Lord's Supper and sharing communion as a community. Beginning this Sunday, only bread will be served. There is liturgical precedent for this; our Reformed sacramental theology understands that in our celebration of the Lord's Supper we remember the meal Jesus shared with his disciples. We will continue that celebration and that remembrance. We will do so, however, in a way that enables us to best care for our community. Clergy will continue leaving the Sanctuary to wash their hands before serving.
- Offering plates will not be passed person to person. Instead, ushers will have the plates available at the doors at the conclusion of worship to collect financial gifts and contributions.

The Overnight Shelter and the Open Table

These are the plans we have in place for these important ministries:

- Both the Overnight Shelter and the Open Table will continue. We are in touch with Department of Health recommendations for shelters and social service agencies, as well as peer congregations including Saint James and Fifth Avenue. We are committed to continuing these ministries, even in adapted formats (providing bagged meals, rather than serving at tables) as needed. Should our volunteer base dwindle, or DOH recommendations change, our plans will continue to evolve.

On the Possibility of Closing

At present, we foresee no need to close MAPC. However, we do have a plan in place should circumstances change. As we do with weather-related concerns, we will follow the guidance of the NYC public school system. If the public schools close, we will do the same. If independent schools close, we will weigh that information carefully.

Please do all that you can to maintain your health and the health of your family, friends, colleagues, and fellow members of this faith community. Be in touch with me or any of the pastoral staff if you have questions, concerns, or helpful suggestions.

The words of the angels come to us throughout the entire scriptural witness. From Genesis to Revelation and countless instances in between, they remind us, "Do not be afraid." These are good words to cling to right now. So too are some of the words we will read together in worship this Sunday, words from the prophet Isaiah:

"But now thus says the Lord, he who created you and formed you: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name and you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. You are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you. Do not fear, for I am with you, everyone is called by my name, for I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."

Trust in these words, and trust the God who holds us close, always.

Rev. Jenny M. McDevitt
Senior Pastor

PS: On a different note altogether: don't forget the time change this weekend!