



Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church

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March 11, 2020

Dear Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church,

This past week in worship, we considered the second of six Great Ends of the Church: the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God. "What does it mean," I questioned, "to provide for shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship when words like epidemic and pandemic are being used seriously? How do we determine the right way forward as a church, ensuring that we are a people of faith, not fear, but also ensuring that we are people of wisdom, discernment, and responsibility?"

There are no easy, ready-made answers to this question, of course, but the church staff, in consultation with the Session, continues to find our way forward one step at a time.

We have determined it is time to take even stronger precautions. **Worship will continue on Sunday mornings. However, no other church-related event will take place in-person. This is effective Monday, March 16, 2020, through the end of March.** As it gets closer to April, we will reassess. It is possible we will need to extend this further, but we are not making that determination yet. We believe the most faithful thing we can do right now is help contain the spread of COVID-19 and take care of our most vulnerable people.

Committees may wish to meet utilizing teleconference or videoconference platforms. Staff members or committee chairs will be in touch with you about this. Rev. Beverly Bartlett is working on offering Bible study via Zoom or pre-recorded video. The Music on Madison concert on March 22 is cancelled, and the Saint Andrew Chorale and Orchestra Concert on March 29 is being rescheduled for late May. The Open Table meal will be prepared for and packaged in paper bags, then handed to guests outside of the building. We are still in conversation regarding the Overnight Shelter.

This may feel like a drastic step, but we feel it is a responsible one. The Atlantic recently posted an article titled [Cancel Everything](#), and while this piece emerged after our decision was made, it summarizes some of the rationale behind our decision nicely. As you have doubtless noticed, a number of schools and universities are closing as well. The New York City Department of Health has revised its recommendations for prevention [here](#).

Brick Presbyterian Church and Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, among others, have made similar decisions. Many other congregations are in the process of doing likewise. I remain in close

conversation with them, our staff, and members of Session so that these decisions are not being made in a vacuum.

Please know your staff is still working diligently and is only a phone call or email away. We are preparing for creative ministry options this month, while also hoping to return to our "normal" way of being come April. We will be ready in either case, however.

You are in our prayers. We look forward to seeing many of you on Sunday, but also want to encourage you to make careful decisions about attending. If you feel unwell, please stay home. Let us know if you need help. And keep watching for additional communication.

Peace,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jenny".

Rev. Jenny M. McDevitt
Senior Pastor