



The First Presbyterian Church of Naples

*In the Heart of Naples with the Love of God:
we worship, we love, we grow, we serve*

March 26, 2020

Dear First Presbyterian Church of Naples Family:

Grace and peace to you this day.

I write to inform you of the Session's action last evening and to encourage you as the family of faith during this extraordinary time.

In response to the continuing and growing Coronavirus or COVID - 19 crisis and in accordance with the advice of health experts and government officials, the Session has decided to extend the suspension of public worship and all activities and programs at the church building through April 30. This action is taken for your safety, the safety of our guests and community, and in order to help stop the spread of this deadly disease. It is what love calls us to do.

Your church staff will continue to work from home, checking voicemail and e-mail and are dedicated to assuring that all essential functions are performed. They are coming to the church building only as needed. The staff will receive full pay and benefits during this time.

We will continue to record worship services (including Holy Week and Easter services), post them online and send them to you by e-mail. In addition, videos of encouragement and Lenten organ concerts will also be posted and sent. As we earlier reported, we are grateful to our Deacons who have been keeping in touch with our members by phone and e-mail. Just as the Session met by telephone conference, we are encouraging committees and fellowship groups to explore meeting by phone, Zoom or other platforms and social media. You see, the church building may be closed, but the truth is we are the church.

In addition to staying connected, the Session deems it vitally important that we be the church by reaching out to our members and community and to those in need. We have many members who have volunteered to help, by making deliveries of groceries and supplies. Rev. Rex Childs is helping coordinate this effort so please, if you are aware of a need within or without our congregation, are willing to help, or if you need help with technology, please be in touch with Rex at rexc@fpcnaples.org.

In addition, we will be reaching out to our mission partners, the Presbytery, and the community to see how we can help. The Session has approved establishing a "Coronavirus Emergency Relief Fund" for that purpose. Details on the fund are being worked on now. More on that later.

Finally, with the suspension of public worship we are already seeing a decrease in our offerings. This is to be expected and the staff and committees are working on reducing expenses to only what is necessary. How can you help to assure that our ministries and operations continue and that we are able to reach out to our neighbors in need? By giving now. Please mail in your contributions or give online at www.fpcnaples.org and click "give online." For those of you who have made a pledge for 2020, please consider, if you are able, paying ahead on that pledge or paying your pledge in full now. We are grateful for one member providing a wonderful example, who wrote saying he would be fulfilling his pledge and would add \$500. If you have questions please contact our Director of Finance, Anna Focht at annaf@fpcnaples.org.

Wherever you are, I hope you are well and are taking the necessary precautions by staying home. And if you have to leave your home, be sure to exercise social distancing. This is truly the loving thing to do at this time.

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And I hope that with the gift of unexpected time, you are finding new blessings, a new way of thinking, that you are going deeper in prayer and scripture, and realizing what is most important in this life - loving relationships with God, with neighbor and with yourself.

I close with the words of the Apostle Paul in Romans. Having affirmed that the “Spirit helps us in our weakness” he writes, “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor rulers nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:28).

And so it is, now more than ever, that we are called to be the church of Jesus Christ here “in the heart of Naples with the love of God.”

Blessings, Peace, Courage and Love to you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Craig". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Craig Goodrich, Senior Pastor