

PASTORAL MESSAGE

For 5/2/20

John Wesley insisted that faith is linked with how we live. Faith results in fruit. He gave us three rules to follow, in how to live a Christian life:

“First: By doing no harm, by avoiding evil of every kind ...;

Secondly: By ... doing good of every possible sort, and, as far as possible, to all ...;

Thirdly: By attending upon all the ordinances of God.”

2016 Book of Discipline

So as United Methodists, we practice a “Way” inspired by a great healer, Jesus of Nazareth. Our first rule in our Christian walk is to follow the same directive as physicians pledge: do no harm.

Over the next few weeks, months, and beyond, we will continually ask ourselves, “What is the next step?” It helps to be clear about our values, when we ponder decision-making steps. At every step, we will be asking whether we risk “doing harm” by an action or inaction.

We have settled into a way of being the church that allows us to follow social distancing guidelines, during this time of world-wide pandemic. The internet has helped us to stay connected, and to feel a sense of community in worship and study. We do recognize, however, that a group of us do not have smart phones, computers, or the internet. We are starting to debate if this is the group who should be the first invited to a face-to-face worship experience, if rules loosen to allow small gatherings (less than 25 persons).

At the same time, many in our congregation are in an age group, or have a health concern, that places them in an extremely vulnerable situation during this pandemic. It is not only distancing, masking, and number of persons present that we will need to address. A major puzzle we will need to solve and plan for, according to both CDC and PA Department of Health fact sheets on safe gatherings, is how we will disinfect and clean, before, during, and after each event we might offer.

The wisdom literature of Proverbs is chock full of suggestions on how to “walk in faith.” Proverbs 19:2 may be helpful in the upcoming weeks, as we strive to remain non-anxious in our decision-making: “Desire without knowledge is not good, and one who moves too hurriedly misses the way.”

We have had many blessings in the past weeks: new participants in worship preparation, new connections, new missions and ministries, continuation of worship, continuation of Sunday School classes, faithfulness in phone calls, cards, and financial support. God is good.

God will continue to be good, as we maintain the discipline of social distancing. God will continue to be good as we move to make changes in our facility cleaning and gathering behaviors, that would allow us to begin some face-to-face gatherings.

Keep practicing the Way, in all you do. Keep the leaders of our church in your prayers, as decisions are made. Pray for remaining true to our values, and wise to the reality that God gave us the ability to discern and process knowledge for the transformation of the world.

Once again, this week, stay home, but stay connected! May God bless you, and through you, the world.

Peace and blessings,
Pastor Chris