



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
HARRISBURG AREA – SUSQUEHANNA CONFERENCE

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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 8:38-39)

May your unfailing love be my comfort, according to your promise to your servant.”
(Psalm 119:76)

Beloved Sisters and Brothers of the Susquehanna Conference,

Grace to you in the name of Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace, Healer of our Brokenness, and Hope of the World.

I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for all of your hard work, creativity, flexibility, patience and prayers during these very difficult times. You continue to show your faithfulness and commitment to Christ and the people you serve. I thank God for the many ways you and your congregations continue to be in ministry even in these times.

As your bishop, I implore the Susquehanna Conference churches to continue to suspend all gatherings for worship and other non-essential activities until further notice. As the COVID-19 situation escalates, we must follow the best preventive practices and use utmost caution. We are closely monitoring the directives of Governor Wolf, the Pennsylvania Department of Health, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. If any of the current limitations change, we will offer you guidance accordingly on how to comply.

I am sure the question of how to celebrate Palm Sunday, Holy Week, and Easter services is weighing on your mind. The District Superintendents have been telling me how many of you are already creatively planning for these sacred days in this new time when we worship together, yet at a distance.

I would remind everyone that on the first Easter evening, Jesus appeared to his disciples even though the doors were locked. The next week, even though the door was shut, Jesus appeared to the disciples. Nothing can hold back our Risen Lord! Although we may not be physically together in worship on Easter, the power of the Risen Christ does and will come to God's people in their personal space, homes, and hearts.

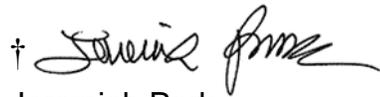
While we must not hold any group worship services, consider alternatives to Holy Communion. One option is to observe a Love Feast. At the bottom of this letter is a link to some [guidelines and suggestions](#), as well as link to an order of service “[for when we cannot meet](#).” Please know that virtual consecration is not allowed. Please process your questions regarding Communion with your District Superintendent. As much as possible, uniformity and consistency in sacramental practice are critical to our covenantal community.

As far as safety of the people under our care is concerned, I have to put my trust in you, leaders of the church, that you exercise your best judgment, decisions, and practice with faithfulness, integrity, love and care. We have to trust one another as we put our trust in our God, who cares for us and whose love for us is unfailing and even eternal.

Social distancing is a very challenging time for all of us. However, we know that it is the best way to flatten the curve. It saves lives. It's about "doing no harm". It's also about "doing good". More will live because we are doing it. During our Lenten journey through the Holy Week, social distancing can also be about "staying in love with God". It can be a tremendously beneficial time to develop a closer and more intimate relationship with God.

Please continue to pray. Prayer is vital in these times. Let us remain focused on God to ease our anxieties and give us strength to move to the other side of the current crisis soon. With God, we will.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeremiah Park", with a small cross symbol to the left of the first letter.

Jeremiah Park

Additional Resources:

[Online Worship During Social Distancing](#)

[A Liturgy for When We Cannot Meet](#)