



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
HARRISBURG AREA – SUSQUEHANNA CONFERENCE

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Bishop Jeremiah J. Park

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Dear Sisters and Brothers of the Susquehanna Annual Conference,

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

Reports about COVID-19, (also known as the Coronavirus) show that it poses a serious threat to people in many countries, including the United States and is expanding its contagion in diverse communities. In times like these our worries and anxieties can be overwhelming. But it is important to be in a calm frame of mind and to keep a non-anxious posture. There are some precautions we can take to minimize the spreading of germs and protect us from harms way.

The following simple things can help ease our congregations' concerns.

- **Greetings** – refrain from shaking hands and hugging or suggest other options such as elbow taps
- **Passing the Peace** – refrain from passing the peace or suggest other options such as bowing with hands over your heart or in a prayer gesture.
- **Offering** – a common plate or basket should not be passed. Consider placing offering plates at the front or another place in the sanctuary and invite congregants to come and place their offering there.
- **Communion preparation** - individuals preparing communion need to wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and wear gloves.
- **Communion** - refrain from using a common cup (intinction). Instead use individual single cups and pieces of bread. Those helping to serve communion should wear gloves and hand the individual cups and pieces of bread to persons rather than have everyone take their own.
- **Be aware of vulnerable people in your congregation** - such as elderly and those with underlying medical conditions.
- **Please have sanitizer available in all gatherings.**
- **Please avoid touching your face with your hands.**
- **Please cough or sneeze into your elbow or into a tissue (not your hands). If using a tissue be sure to properly dispose of it.**
- **Please properly clean all equipment and frequently touched objects often.**
- **Please have designated persons like ushers/greeters to open and close doors for services to limit the amount of people touching the doorknobs.**
- **Please contact medical facilities and seek help when you show symptoms of sickness.**
- **Please stay home when you are ill.**

Please communicate with your congregation, especially those more vulnerable to the virus, the importance of these changes as well as the support and care the church has for them and for all people in this situation. It's critically important that you keep up to date with the latest information about the Coronavirus. Listed below with this letter are two resources to help you stay informed.

As we do what we can to be healthy and vigilant, we are reminded of the words of the Psalmist, "The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day nor the moon by night. The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore." Psalm 121.

Our prayers surround those who are under the medical treatments from the disease, medical and first responder communities, and the vulnerable people who are in dire need for proper care all over the world. Lord, have mercy.

In Christ's Ministry with you,

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

Jeremiah J. Park

Pennsylvania Department of Health:

<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx>

Center for Disease Control: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/index.html>