

Berkey friends,

We as a pastoral staff are continuing to monitor the evolving situation regarding the coronavirus and how we as a congregation can best protect and care for each other. As we do so, we have asked Dan Nafziger and Paul Shetler Fast to give us guidance because of their expertise in infectious diseases and public health.

In consultation with them and others, we have decided that Berkey will not have services this Sunday, March 15. While this likely will be the case for several weeks, we will be providing regular updates. The decision to cancel Sunday services was not made lightly and, to some, it may seem premature. In the end, we felt that it would be best for all of us to share the burden of giving up our large gatherings rather than encouraging our most vulnerable members to make that decision alone. Canceling services is also a small but important way for us to care for our community by not adding stress to a health care system with limited resources.

In the days ahead, Berkey's commissions will be exploring ways to connect and to care for each other and our neighbors. In addition, several of you already have expressed creative ideas and a willingness to help, and we invite others to do so as well.

As a congregation, may we approach this pandemic not as something we simply have to endure until we can get back to normal. Instead, let us approach it as an opportunity to lean more deeply into our motto: we want to be "Christ's loving, caring, healing presence in the world." In the days and weeks ahead, we will have opportunities to care for those who are isolated or sick through prayers, phone calls, picking up prescriptions, delivering food and groceries, or ways that aren't known to us right now. For those over sixty years old or with underlying medical conditions, we encourage you to stay at home and to communicate your needs.

We as pastors want each of you to know that we're available for you. If you need pastoral care or have any needs where we can be of help, please email or call one of us. In addition, Jenny Hooley will continue to maintain office hours and to monitor the office email account.

In these anxious times, may "the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, . . . guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:7).

Mark Schloneger

Joanne Gallardo

Dan Schrock