

March 18, 2020

Dear Friends,

Churches are always here to provide spiritual growth, nurture our faith, surround those in need with compassion and love, to share our blessings by supporting missions, and most importantly, to provide a sacred time where we worship our God and open ourselves to God's grace and forgiveness. This is especially true and especially needed during times of uncertainty and anxiety.

As we face the spread of the COVID-19 virus, the CDC, our political leaders and our bishop have asked us to suspend all gatherings as the church, sadly, which includes the sacred time of worship. Church leadership has concurred with this request as it is imperative that we do all we can for the safety and health of our members. **This does not mean** that we are abdicating our responsibilities as the church, only that we now are investigating new ways to provide the ministries we are called to do as the church.

Here is what you can expect from your church going forward. We will have a weekly worship!!!!!! We are fortunate that Dove has been doing live-streaming for months which will allow us to continue bringing worship to you. This Sunday we will do what we know, which is to live-stream our 9:30 worship to you over Facebook. **(This does not mean we are gathering at 9:30 as the church, only that several of us as worship leaders will provide the elements of worship for the streaming in the Praise style of worship.)** We are working with our technical people to expand the venues by which we can bring this sacred time to you in the coming weeks.

We are taking this disruption in our present routines and practices to find ways we can improve the scope and quality of our many ministries so we may better serve you. Our worship is a prime example. In the next weeks we will stream more diversified styles of worship knowing we all experience the Spirit in many differing ways. Worship is meant to be participatory, so we are learning how we can put the words of the songs and hymns in the worship on the screen so you, also, can lift your voices in praise.

Just as we are finding new and expanded ways to bring you worship, we are also finding new and meaningful ways to bring a full complement of ministries to you as well. Our Children and Family Ministries will be providing weekly intergenerational lessons that will allow families to study together and do devotionals at home. The home has always been, and will always be, where faith, values and character are best taught. You can be assured that we will provide ongoing support and direction for this to happen.

Bible study and devotional time will become even more significant to us all as we seek to find the presence and comfort of God's Spirit in our lives. George will be sending out guidelines for the practice of Bible Study called Lectio Divina, also known as praying the scriptures. This way of utilizing the Bible allows God's Spirit to speak through the scriptures to us to address the immediacy of the day ahead. George will send a weekly list of scriptures as a suggestion for your use.

George is also ready to do an online book study if any would be interested. Just let him know if this is something that you would like to participate in.

Pastoral Care is something we have always prioritized at Dove. The Care Ministry we have been blessed by is second to none in our Conference. Pastor Louie has provided a compassionate breadth and depth of care to all who reach out to the church. This area of ministry will continue to be a priority and we will do all we can within the parameters we face. If anyone has a pastoral emergency or would just like to talk or have a prayer lifted up, please call Pastor Louie on his cell (623) 238-8455. Louie has committed to providing a daily prayer and meditation on the church's prayer line when we determine the easiest way to do that. He also sends out his daily prayer chain email; if you would like to be included to receive those emails, please email Pastor Louie at carepastor@doveofthedesert.com. We are investigating any additional ways we can be of service in a time of need or crisis.

We again ask for your guidance on what would be helpful to you. A significant concern is that many of you may feel alone or isolated from others as we practice the directive of social distancing. As important as this can be for our physical health, we are concerned about our emotional and spiritual wellbeing as well. We have discussed setting up phone trees to help create social contacts. We are prepared to hear your thoughts and implement practices that truly show our care and support, but also can keep you connected to each other.

These measures to protect our health come as we approach our most significant time in the life of the church, Easter. It appears likely that we may not be able to gather for Easter. We are preparing for such a contingency. First, we will create an Easter worship to be streamed to you. We have also scheduled what we are calling Easter in May. We have chosen the date of May 17 to celebrate the fullness of Easter together. This date is beyond the present guidelines of social distancing for the next 8 weeks. Many of the special events and worships we celebrate on Easter will be offered. We will have a Sunrise Service, a pancake breakfast, an Easter Egg hunt and glorious worships as we sing the Easter hymns. To gather together will indeed be a celebration of resurrection as we can once again enjoy the fellowship of brothers and sisters in the Family of God.

As you can see, we are preparing to meet the many challenges to be the church during these uncertain times. If you have any thoughts on how we may best serve you, please let us know. The staff remains committed to its ongoing ministry to you. We will also continue to do the daily management and business of the church. We are discussing modified office hours so there will be a presence, if needed, to meet an emergency, while carrying out the needed tasks to do our ministry.

This leads us to ask you for your support so we can meet the ongoing needs of Dove and the community we serve. Please keep your tithes and offerings coming to the church so we can meet our obligations and live our mission. If you mail them, our office staff will receive them, post them and get them deposited. We have the ability to receive offerings on-line. We will post instructions on how to do this. We understand that with the uncertainty of employment and income, some of you may not be able to give as you were used to please know we understand the priorities you face. For those of us who may not face those uncertainties, if you could take a next step in your giving, we would deeply appreciate it.

It is indeed a time we find many facing the anxieties associated with uncertainty and the loss of important routines, especially a weekly time to be with your church family. It is here we think

about that moment we call the benediction where we acknowledge the God who blesses us in worship is the God who remains with us throughout the week. We are indeed an Easter people. As one famous sermon reminds us, "It may be Good Friday, we may be facing our crosses, but Sunday is coming." Hope abounds for we have the promise that, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

We close our worship services with a hymn or song. There is one that seems appropriate at this time.

*God be with you till we meet again; by his counsels guide, uphold you,
With his sheep securely fold you; God be with you till we meet again.*

*God be with you till we meet again; neath his wings securely hide you,
Daily manna still provide you; God be with you till we meet again.*

*God be with you till we meet again; when life's perils thick confound you,
Put his arms unfailing round you; God be with you till we meet again.*

We close with Jesus' benediction to his disciples.

²⁷Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. (John 14:27)

Your Church Staff and Leadership