**Corbin Presbyterian Church**

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Dear Corbin Presbyterian Church Members and Friends,

Wednesday morning, Gov. Andy Beshear encouraged all places of worship to cancel worship services this weekend as a precautionary and preventative measure amid the growing concern of the coronavirus. Likewise, the Presbytery of Transylvania also distributed an announcement encouraging Presbyterian congregations in the area to heed the Governor's request that all churches cancel services on Sunday, March 15th. Here is an excerpt from that communication:

"Given the average age of our congregants and the determination to err of the side of health and safety, we humbly recommend cancelling worship for March 15 and then deciding from week to week, depending on the future spread of the virus. We would also recommend cancelling any large gatherings your church may have including mid-week services until it seems prudent to resume."

"We’ve been told by experts and believe that these short-term decisions will produce long terms gains in limiting the spread of this virus. We also believe that by making these decisions now, we will protect the most vulnerable in our population from a potentially fatal or debilitating outcome, even if many won’t feel affected by this virus. While worship is extremely important to us, so is being a good neighbor and making sure we hold our communities in the highest regard."

**The Session met Wednesday evening to prayerfully consider these concerns and has unanimously voted to cancel all group activities this week, including Sunday school and worship this Sunday, March 15.**

What does this mean? It means that we ask everyone to stay home this Sunday morning and participate in worship by reading and reflecting on the devotional materials posted on the church Facebook page and website, www.corbinpres.org or (hopefully!) watching a live-stream or recording of prayer and my reflections on the scripture passages for Sunday, Psalm 23 and John 4:5-42 (the Samaritan woman at the well).

**The Session also encourages all church members and friends to be mindful of the most vulnerable around us by checking on those who are advised to remain at home, isolated in care facilities, and reaching out with care and concern to their loved ones and caregivers. Please be sure to communicate any spiritual or practical needs to me or a Session member.**

**While health and safety are of primary concern, the Session also encourages members and friends to remember that the church’s financial commitments continue even when we cannot gather for worship, and to continue regular patterns of giving by mail or other means.**

The Session will meet at its regularly scheduled time, next week on Tuesday, March 17th, and re-evaluate to decide how best to move forward. Our website, Facebook page, and phone voicemail will be changed to reflect the latest developments and measures being taken to inform members and friends who do not have access to email.

I know that not everyone will agree with the decision to cancel worship this Sunday; after all, not all of us are equally worried about contracting the virus. However, we are reminded of these words from Philippians 2:1-4:

*"If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others." -- Philippians 2:1-4*

Please know that the Session has not made any of these decisions lightly. Worshipping together is at the heart of our Christian identity and there is grief in deciding to cancel or limit our time together. These decisions are also not based on a lack of faith or out of fear, but made in love. As some colleagues have reminded me “Fear divides; love draws us together, towards God and towards one another.” In making these decisions, the Session seeks to “act with the kind of love that asks us to put aside our desires in light of the common good. In faith, with love and, finally, with hope the Session has chosen to respond, to the best of our abilities to act with wisdom. The present threat to public health, to the most vulnerable among us, is a threat that will, in time, pass. While it passes it is wise to consider and take action as we learn more and more.”

Know that we are praying for you and all those who are affected. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Grace and peace,
Lisa