



March 20, 2020

Dear Fellow Methodists and Friends of the Methodist Church,

Jesus said, "In this world you will have trouble. *But take heart! I have overcome the world*" (John 16:33).

As we navigate our way through the COVID-19 pandemic, the Church has an important role to play in the efforts toward reducing its spread and in the support of people and communities.

To this end, I write today to share the news that, based on recommendations of medical professionals, I have prayerfully made the difficult decision to suspend public worship and church gatherings for the period covering **Sunday March 22nd to Wednesday April 1st** in the first instance. (Update will be given on Wednesday March 25th) The health and well-being of our community must be the priority!

The suspension of public worship and gatherings does not mean that the church will not be called to worship, study and pray. Preparations are well on the way to call the Faith Community to online worship every Sunday morning at 9.00 a.m. via live stream, YouTube and Facebook Live. More details will be forthcoming.

We will also continue our Prayer Meetings, Bible Study and essential meetings via the various social media platforms.

We know that Satan is doing all he can to silence the proclamation of God's saving gospel. We know that our tries to use events like this to drive a wedge between God and his people. But we also know that God can and will cause even this crisis to work together for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. He will use this to drive us to the cross of our Saviour, where he gave himself to make us his own. And he will lead us to the open door of the empty tomb, where he demonstrated his complete victory over Satan, sin, and death!

Thank you for your patience and understanding. Let us continue to pray for each other, especially those who have succumbed to this illness; and that the Lord will free us from this COVID-19 pandemic so that we can continue to worship freely and build up the community in love and service. Pray also for those on the frontlines – the doctors, nurses and other healthcare workers – who are sacrificing their own well-being in the service of the sick; that the Lord will protect them and their loved ones from harm.

May our gracious God, our Creator, Redeemer, and Preserver, keep you strong in your faith and confident in his promises.

Fellow Servant of Christ.

Bishop, The Rev. Derick A. Richards
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