



The Congregational Church

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
P.O. BOX 237, MAIN STREET
EAST HAMPTON, CONNECTICUT 06424

March 12, 2020

To Members of the Congregational Church of East Hampton:

We are called as people of faith to protect one another, particularly the most vulnerable among us. At our church and in our denomination, all our missions, fund raisers, and community activities add to our support of each other. As you know, corona virus cases are now present in many parts of the country, including here in Connecticut.

We have made the difficult decision to cancel worship services and close the church building from Monday March 16 through Monday March 30. All ministries and programs that take place in our building or require us to gather in person including Sunday worship are canceled during this period.

The three Conference Ministers of the Southern New England Conference recommended that the 608 churches in the Conference suspend in-person worship to help slow the spread of the Covid-19 coronavirus. Our Church leadership is in agreement with this recommendation and have taken this action to help protect both our members and the community at large.

We will hold a worship service this Sunday 3/15 with changes in the program to minimize the risk of infection. For our safety, there will be no coffee hour after service. This is not the first time that our churches have suspended public worship. One hundred and two years ago, churches closed for two to six weeks during the great flu epidemic. As it was then, these are extraordinary and unusual times.

We are also researching how to set up and present a "on-line worship service" lead by Pastor Latimer in place of one or both of the canceled services. Since this is new to us and we have never done it before, it requires some research and planning. We will follow up with instructions when we have that set up.

While the vast majority (80%) of COVID-19 cases are mild, some people do experience severe symptoms, so it is in the best interest of us all to do what we can to prevent the spread of illness. The CDC recommends the following common-sense practices:

- If you are experiencing symptoms such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath, please stay home to avoid sharing your germs with others.
- If you believe you have been exposed to coronavirus and are experiencing symptoms, call your health care provider.
- Practice good basic hygiene practices, especially handwashing. Use soap and running water, and wash for at least 20 seconds (long enough to pray the Lord's Prayer or sing through "Jesus Loves Me," "When the Saints Go Marching In," "Peace Like a River," or "Don't Be Afraid". If you don't have access to soap and water, hand sanitizer is a good second choice.

The SNE Conference has set up a web page with helpful resources and information about the pandemic at this address: <https://www.sneucc.org/coronavirus>

Be well, friends, and remember that there is nothing, not even coronavirus, that can separate us from the love of God. Do not hesitate to contact any one of us or the church office during these difficult times.

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