An update to the people known as Marion Methodist, March 17, 2020

The Apostle in 2 Timothy 1:17 says: "For God did not give us a spirit of fear. He gave us a spirit of power and of love and of a good mind." These seem like wise words today. We are not afraid, and we have a spirit of love, power and good minds. I say this to tell you this:

Marion Methodist is suspending **ALL** “in person activities” until further notice. This includes worship, discipleship classes - **ALL** activities. Everything we do is inside **ALL**!

This is hard for the old preacher because our being together, our caring for each other up to this moment has always primarily been face to face. We built The CENTER to enhance our being together and now, it is my responsibility to say, during these very different days of aggressively trying to slow down the spread of a known killer virus, we must concentrate on being TOGETHER - - APART.

Your Marion Methodist staff, and lay leadership team is working hard to continue our ministry and connection through digital sources. We believe that except for the very important face to face “live touch” function of our ministries we can share instruction, prayer, conversation and fellowship even if we are not together in person.

Christian Education and Worship will be provided to the congregation (and anyone else who joins us) at the following times.

**Wednesday Evening:**

- **6:00PM** Christian Education Lesson for Children (and Parents) led by Dani Showalter
- **6:30PM** Pastoral Message and Bible Study led by Rev. Mike Morgan
- **7:30PM** 4:12 Student Ministry led by Kelsie DeReus (and team)

Access is through the church website [www.marionmethodist.org](http://www.marionmethodist.org) and then click **WATCH LIVE** at the top right hand corner of your screen.

**Sunday Morning**

- **10:15AM** Live Worship with Children’s Education Moments

Again the pathway is through the church website [www.marionmethodist.org](http://www.marionmethodist.org) and then click **WATCH LIVE** at the top right hand corner of your screen.

We are working with several digital vendors to find the best program for all of our small groups and classes. We need something that can be accessed via computers, phones, iPad, etc. so that if you decide to participate you can. Our intention is to announce that to our leaders and the congregation by week’s end. Class and small group leaders are then empowered to find their best route forward.

We ask for grace, the world is upside down right now and like you, we are doing the best we can. Be confident that God himself will take us to a very good place through these difficult times.

**REPEAT:** Access TO WORSHIP, Christian Education and 4:12 is through the church website [www.marionmethodist.org](http://www.marionmethodist.org) then click **WATCH LIVE** at the top right hand corner of your screen.
This is a time for the expansion of our Prayer Ministry

Now, more than ever, we need to stay connected and we need to be in prayer with and for each other. You can be a part of this powerful time in our church’s life in two ways:

1. Being added to the Marion Methodist Prayer Team
2. Sharing your joys, concerns and prayers so that others can pray for you.

To submit prayers or be added to the prayer team, please email Vicki at vstandley@marionmethodist.org or call the church office at 377-4856 and ask for Vicki or leave a message. If you don’t have access to email, let Vicki know and she will send out a weekly list of prayers to those of you not online.

Pastoral and Congregational Care Ministry

Our local hospitals are struggling with how to manage visitors. Unity Point has a “no visitor” policy and Mercy has a one visitor policy as of March 17th. Please know that regardless of quarantines, viruses and the like, your pastoral care staff and care team walk with you through that which troubles you, emotionally, spiritually and, of course, physically. Vicki Standley, Rev. Mike Morgan and members of our Care Team are equipped and able to pray with you over the phone and/or any other technological source you desire.

Vicki Standley, Director of Pastoral Care  319.310.5195
Rev. Mike Morgan  319.721.8549

Our Outreach to Others Continues

Feeding Lunches to Youth (F.L.Y.) has been activated during the Spring Break week as is our custom. Simon Campbell directs FLY and is in consultation with various school and community groups regarding next steps and what our role might be in making sure at-risk children (and potentially families) have nutrition throughout this crisis.

Marion Food Pantry will continue to serve our community. Donations to the food pantry can be dropped off directly at the pantry (864 12th Street) every Tuesday and Thursday morning between 8:30 and 9:30. They can also be dropped off at the church 5050 REC Dr. between 8PM and 4PM. If you bring donations to the church, please “ring the doorbell” located on the steel post that also has the handicap door opener and push button security pad outside both east and west entrances. No need waiting for someone to come, just ring it a couple of times and leave. During March our target item is Peanut Butter and every non-perishable item you can donate.

Giving to the Ministry of Marion Methodist

Marion Methodist knows that these are difficult times and we feel the church is God’s best plan for claiming the opportunity this adversity affords us. If you have read this far, you are committed to the church and know that our ministries, buildings and staff are dependent on your prayers, hard work and voluntary contributions. Gifts, tithes and offerings can be mailed to the church at 1298 7th Avenue or you can give electronically through www.marionmethodist.org and clicking on the word “give” across the top banner.

**REPEAT:** Access TO WORSHIP, Christian Education and 4:12 is through the church website www.marionmethodist.org then click WATCH LIVE at the top right hand corner of your screen.
Today, March 17th our governor has increased the level of self-quarantine and we at the church support her efforts to slow the advance of the pandemic. Clearly, the coronavirus (COVID 19) has its hands in all we do and we are in for a long battle.

The prayer "I Cannot Do This Alone" has been the center of our worship and spiritual preparation for Easter and seems even more appropriate each day. The words are poignant, captivating, true. They are not a new idea; they are simply right. I cannot do this alone is the appropriate prayer as we stand in a global pandemic that will define this portion of our lives.

Sunday morning, I reminded you that Scripture assures us we need not attempt our most difficult times alone. David in Psalm 46 writes “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.” He goes on to write of the various trials and difficulties humanity may encounter and then concludes with a simple command from God’s voice: “Be still, and know, that I am God.”

In our most difficult times, particularly in a time of world-wide pandemic, we do not do life alone – God is our refuge (safe place) and strength (power for going on). We can knowingly trust in Him and “be still.” To that end, Ed Stetzer wrote a word of warning to us; “Fear and paranoia will sideline more Christians than any virus” to remind us we are not alone, we do what we do knowing with confidence that God comforts, guard, protects and gives us peace.

I quote Psalm 46 and Ed to encourage you to look for the opportunity God is providing you in this and every moment. Today, in relative terms we are all self-quarantined and some of us are beginning to struggle with the very difficult virus that has descended upon us. Sometimes this will be hard, other times very hard, and through it all God is providing opportunity.

Today, because some of you were on Spring break, others could not get the computer to link, some fell asleep while participating in church online for the first time, I repeat a few opportunities God provides you to act on His behalf in this and every day.

Christians are always to be light in the darkness. Jesus calls us the “Light of the World” because those who love him always are seen carrying light into dark situations. In 1982 I witnessed Christians being God’s light in the world as an intern at the Hospice of St. John in Denver. All we knew then was that AIDS, a new mysterious disease, was killing every young man we admitted. Daily, Christians of many stripes came by to bathe, counsel, pray with, talk and just be present with the very ill. Every volunteer fearlessly signed a waiver acknowledging the unknown peril they were walking towards.

Like then, we are walking into unknown peril and we may be called to minister to the suffering in our family or community and we shall. Now, like then, we take precautions and we do what we can do to bring light to the suffering soul. We witness to the goodness of God – even during this we breathe positivity into every occasion. Knowing that every darkness is followed by light.

Christians pray. We engage the Lord daily by listening for a word from Him. We adore God, confess our sins to the Lord, give thanksgiving for all we have received, and we pray for others. Some amongst us are ill with the coronavirus – pray for them. Some of us are worried about the spread and the long-term effects of the virus – pray for them. Some are caring for those ill with the virus – pray for them. (Note three prayers on the last page crafted for this time)

Grow your spiritual life. If we are spending more time socially distanced, we should have more time. This may be the opportunity you have been waiting for spiritually. You may be granted time to read a spiritual book or start a spiritual discipline. YouTube is filled with great teaching videos like CS Lewis “Mere Christianity” with pictographs and I know Netflix and other delivery services have some great Christian movies or shows. If you find one, socialize it with friends
and church family. First (I know it’s last in this paragraph, but you all knew it was coming) read a book of the Bible, and if you would like, send me your notes. Want a direction as to which book to read – Read Matthew or Luke then Ephesians.

**Strengthen your family.** For those who have children in their home, what a great time to read devotions (YouVersion of the Bible is a great app for this), consider some of the great stories of the Bible, teach your morality, play games, exercise, do small projects together all in the name of growing your family unit stronger. For you who live alone, use the telephone, write cards and letters to connect with those who mean the most to you or need you the most right now.

**Remember this will not last forever.** Some of us will get sick, some of us sicker than others. Some may succumb to the virus; this is the nature of a pandemic. Though my eyes well with tears as I wrote the previous sentence, the truth is most of us will live through this, most of us will see the better days that are ahead.

Likely a football coach once barked: “Adversity always brings opportunity,” words that seem critical right now. The Christian is always to seize the opportunity the Lord puts in front of us to build up the Kingdom and God’s people. Today, I encourage that. Obviously, we cannot know what might happen next – ever – we can only determine who we will be in the midst of it – and – remember we do not do it alone.

People of God, you are also my people and you are beloved,

Rev. Mike Morgan

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A Prayer for Those Who Are Ill with Coronavirus

*Lord God,*

*You are the ultimate Healer. God, we come before You to pray for those infected with this virus. We pray for not only their healing, but for them to be comforted while they heal. Lord, please eradicate every ounce of this virus from their bodies. Please heal every cell in their bodies, every infected part of their being. We pray for no lasting effects in their bodies from this illness. Lord, please heal them inside and out and provide them with the medical care they need, with the medications they need, and with the healing not only physically but spiritually so that they may live life and life abundantly ahead. Amen*

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A Prayer for Those Worried about the Spread of the Coronavirus

*Lord God,*

*Worry and fear are not of Your heart. Your Word reminds us that perfect love casts out all fear, and we pray Your perfect love upon the hearts of all those who are burdened with fear of this virus. Lord, we know with no doubt that You are bigger than the threat of anything, especially illnesses. Please comfort those who are living in fear, please free them from the bondage that anxiety creates within. Remind them that You are still on the Throne and that You are still in control. Fully rain down the serenity that comes only from the Prince of Peace. Help those who are living in unease to trust You in this time so that in times to come we may rest assured that You will be faithful to be with us until the end of age. Amen*

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A Prayer for Those Treating the Sick

*Lord God,*

*We come to pray for those who are caring for the sick. It takes a kind and selfless heart to care for those who are sick, and so Father we pray for them. We pray that You would be their source of rest, their source of replenishment when weary, and their source of hope in such overwhelming times. Lord we know that whosoever pours out shall be given back in proportion, so we pray blessings upon these caregivers. We also pray for their health that they may not fall ill. Protect them with a hedge of protection against the germs of coronavirus and help those who are giving to be protected as they nurse others back to health. Amen*