



The Journey

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DISCIPLES MINISTRIES STATEMENT CONCERNING COVID-19

The emergence and spread of COVID-19, as designated by the World Health Organization, has faith leaders wondering about their role and response. At such times, we are reminded of how interconnected our global world can be and how important it is to approach one another with an ethic of compassion and care.

We sometimes focus on the numbers and the maps, yet we are reminded that each reported case of the virus has behind it a person, a family, a community. We are connected globally and our compassion and care reaches out to the full human community. The church is called to be in prayer for those affected, those caring for the affected, for those valiantly trying to diagnose and treat patients, and for the development of strong partnerships across international communities in order to effectively prevent, detect and respond to this virus. As members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), we offer our prayers for healing and support for all affected.

We offer continued thanks for the medical professionals, concerned citizens, and governmental and non-governmental entities across the world that are actively advocating for an effective and appropriate response.

It is important during such a dynamic global event, that we, as the church, also take the time for an informed and thoughtful response. The need for urgency can be fertile ground for fearful reactions. As we try to go about our daily routines, we may even begin to see others through a lens of skepticism, judgment, and fear. In global health crises such as this, we must be attentive not to place blame on particular individuals or communities. We know too well in the histories of the U.S. and global communities how discrimination and isolation develops towards others or those deemed as “other” (e.g. immigrants, the economically poor, targets of religious prejudice, and religious minorities, to name only a few). We encourage a faithful response that is informed by medical and mental health professionals and reflective of our theological identities that we care for all.

One antidote to fear can be information and planning. We encourage the sharing of guidelines for preventing the spread of the virus. Please share prevention strategies with your congregations and communities. While it is tempting to rely on social media outlets for the most up to date information, please be aware of the amount of misinformation that is also shared through these same outlets. In other words, do the research with accredited professional organizations.

Additionally, you may be concerned about church events, including your regular worship and the rituals involved in church life. Once you are well prepared with information about preventative measures, make a response plan for your congregation or organization. One starting point is to gather leadership and craft a plan that works for your community. It is important that you assess the risks with all available information, make thoughtful proactive decisions, and communicate those decisions as widely as possible.

Statement continued next page...

Deadline for the *Journey* is **Thursday, March 19**, at Noon publisher@fcc-hsv.org

3209 Whitesburg Drive, Huntsville, Alabama 35802 Telephone: 256-881-0150 **Office Hours: 9am - 5pm M-F**
Sunday Worship Services: 8:15 & 10:30 a.m. Christian Education for all ages - 9:15 a.m.

...Statement continued.

Additional Faith Responses for Church Leaders

- Create spaces for storytelling and person-to-person sharing: There are other ways church leaders can play a role in calming fears and guiding the community towards responses that embody care and compassion. One way to do this is to help people see the stories behind the numbers. In the reference section below, an article from Emory University illustrates how to share the stories of those we can listen within our communities for stories that remind the church that we are first a community of compassion and care and that fear can undermine our ability to be that kind of community. What are the connections in your community to those who are affected? How might we create spaces where people share their own and their family's stories?
- Be mindful of prejudices that can surface during moments of fear: Let us be mindful of the racial and potentially racist overtones and attitudes that can be present in public accounts of the Coronavirus. As the Coronavirus expands across multiple countries and parts of the world, we know that communities are in need of our solidarity and support in these times of being. Let our faithful response be centered on compassion and care rather than fear, isolation, or division.
- Educate and calm fears: Faith leaders can help educate and calm fears, providing information about risk assessment and best prevention practices. This can happen in worship, newsletters, public bulletin boards, and educational settings. Seek the wisdom of parish nurses and medical professionals within your congregation and community as their professional training provides an informed understanding that can be shared.
- Create spaces for prayer: Use pastoral prayers, prayer meetings and other opportunities to encourage prayer for those suffering, those responding, and those seeking to mitigate the harm caused by the virus.

This faithful statement was created in collaboration with the Office of General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Week of Compassion, and the National Benevolent Association.

The article was modified for space and the entire article is available

First Christian Church Members and Visitors,

After discussions with our Moderator, Jon Ahlbin, Vice Moderator, Brad Clasgens, and with the medical personnel in our congregation, we have decided to cancel worship services for last Sunday, March 15 and Sunday, March 22. After that time, we will evaluate the situation and respond once again to the congregation. We will also be suspending Wednesday night activities as well.

At this time we plan on keeping the church office open, however as information continues to come, there may be changes in the office schedule as well. We want to keep everyone safe, including our staff. We will update you if our office times change or if we decide to close the office for a time. You will still be able to contact Rev. Laura West and I by phone, text or email, however, we will not be visiting in person unless it is an emergency situation and the member or family requests our presence.

Our Mission Family Deacons and Elders will be checking in on our members, especially those who are most vulnerable, to ensure that our community is cared for in the absence of our regular worship and fellowship events. Please let us know your needs and continue to pray for those in our community and in the world that have already been affected by this virus.

It is our hope and prayer that this crisis will be over soon, but I also hope we will still find ways to be in service to God, to each other, and to our community during this time of uncertainty. How we react now, truly reflects our character and faith. Let us keep our first responders, health professionals, and all those who continue to work to keep us safe in our prayers as well as asking God to help remedy this situation globally.

May God Bless you and keep you,

Rev. Paul Allen

ATTENDANCE	3/08	3/15
First Service Worship	30	NA
Sunday School	23	NA
Second Service Worship	74	NA
Children's Church	8	NA
Young Disciples	5	NA
Total Worship	117	NA

**NATIONAL CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY
CENTER - HEALTHY FAMILIES PROGRAM**

During March, Christian Women's Ministries is sponsoring the collection of items for baby baskets for the National Children's Advocacy Center. Each year, approximately 20 baskets are distributed to the new mothers attending classes for caring for new born children. The baskets provide needed items and a gift of support to these struggling mothers.

The suggested items for collection are: 3 month size sleeping attire, baby wipes, shampoo, pacifiers, bibs, diaper rash cream, socks or booties, and receiving blankets. Monetary offerings are also welcome.

GIVING

During this flu and virus season please don't forget your tithes and offerings. You can contact your bank to set up automatic donations or just mail your check to the church if you need to stay home. PayPal is also an option, although, FCC does pay fees for those donations. Above all, take precautions and be well.

SHOP ON AMAZON?

If you shop at Amazon, why not help the church out at the same time? **First Christian Church-Huntsville** is a listed charitable organization with AmazonSmile and receives 0.5% of the eligible purchases you make on Amazon. To use AmazonSmile, go to <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/63-6017148> (this address is for First Christian Church-Huntsville and will automatically credit your purchases to the FCC account) and sign on your Amazon account as usual.

So far, this year, we have received \$274.89 through AmazonSmile purchases that has been deposited in our General Fund.

CHURCH SAFETY IMPROVEMENT

To make our Sunday worship safer and more secure, **beginning Sunday, March 29, 2020** during worship service times, the north side door (by the Church Office and currently designated as "Sunday Entrance") will be locked. That is, from 8:15 a.m. until 9:15 and from 10:30 until 11:30 this door will remain locked. Additionally, this door will remain locked during any combined service, as well. However, the door will be unlocked and monitored during Sunday school time - 9:15 until 10:30 and during the adjusted Sunday school times associated with a combined service. **The exterior Narthex doors leading into the Sanctuary will remain open throughout Sunday morning.** This measure is not intended to inconvenience anyone; we want our church to be open and welcoming, but we also want to keep our children, members, and guests safe.

Thank you,
Safety & Security Committee

**OUR NEXT HABITAT HOME FOR 2020
WILL BE OUR 26TH**



Our next home will be in the new Habitat Village on Meridian across the street for Martin Luther King Jr School. Site preparation is underway. More details when the slab is poured. The street before the house will be repaved soon.

The house that some of us worked on in 2019 was not assigned to our church. I discovered this after a site visit.

Please plan to help out by working on the house, contributing to the Habitat Fund, or praying for our volunteers and the family.

Bob Senn,
Mr. Habitat for FCC

CAN'T MAKE IT TO CHURCH?

Stream it live at: <https://www.twitch.tv/fcchsv>