



Western North Carolina Conference

The United Methodist Church

March 12, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

As we continue to receive communications and information regarding the COVID-19 virus, we are aware of the significant challenges arising on a daily basis. The virus is spreading rapidly, and there are an increasing number of cases reported throughout the state. We know the virus is highly contagious and that mitigation is possible with cautious measures.

It is extremely important that we slow the rate of infection in order to allow our health care services to respond appropriately. If the infection rate increases too quickly, we may not have the health care support required for everyone needing treatment.

Bishop Hope Morgan Ward of the North Carolina Conference and I agree that it is important to suspend public worship for the next two weeks, beginning today. Please use your discretion regarding smaller gatherings like small groups, Bible studies, etc. These precautions are not only important for your own safety but for the health and welfare of the entire community. While we are in unfamiliar territory, health care professionals advise that this is necessary for slowing the rate of infection.

With the awareness of so many who depend on our church ministries, we hope you will be mindful of the need to continue to support these ministries and those of your local church. Your prayers, presence (in spirit), gifts (including financial support), service, and witness are still important and needed to sustain and strengthen our ongoing mission.

Please take precautions to keep yourself, loved ones, congregations, and communities safe.

With gratitude for you and your leadership,

Bishop Paul L. Leeland
Western North Carolina Conference
United Methodist Church