



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

PHOENIX AREA
P.O. BOX 32830
PHOENIX, ARIZONA 85064



July 29, 2020

Dear Members and Friends of the Desert Southwest Conference,

We are learning more and more about the Coronavirus, how it spreads, who it affects, what the long-term effects are, and how to best protect ourselves. As the pandemic spreads, more of us are being impacted by the virus and the illness it causes. Not only is this pandemic taxing our medical and health systems, the impact of COVID-19 has rippling effects on our national and global economy, housing and homelessness, educational systems and much more; impacting those vulnerable and marginalized to the greatest extent.

A recent conversation with someone in one of our churches revealed that this individual believed that the coronavirus was a hoax. This person did not know anyone who had contracted COVID-19, nor did that person know anyone who had died because of it. Therefore, the logic was that this was all a hoax. Along with that pronouncement came the strong request that churches in the DSC be allowed to reopen fully for in-person worship and programming. For those of us who personally know someone who has contracted COVID-19 or someone who has died because of the disease, it is unthinkable that this pandemic would be called a “hoax.” I pray that this individual will never have to endure the suffering or the grief of coming face-to-face with COVID-19.

This is a time when we must lean on our faith to remind us that even if we cannot worship in person in our church sanctuary, we do not abandon our commitment to be in ministry, nor does God abandon us. In this time of continuing challenge, we place our trust in God’s presence with us. Let us remember that “The Lord is my strength and my might, and (God) has become my salvation; this is my God, whom I will praise and I will exalt.” (taken from Exodus 15:2)

It is important that the primary work of all the congregations in the Conference is to encourage us all to be part of the solution to the COVID-19 pandemic, not a part of the problem. Please collaborate with church leadership to formulate a re-opening plan and a congregational covenant. If you have not already begun this helpful process, please do so. The re-opening plan can be found [here](#).

It appears that wearing a mask is making a difference in the statistics for both Nevada and Arizona. However, we have not reached the level of decline that we want to see before moving into Phase I of the Re-Opening Process. **So, for the moment, we will continue our suspension of in-person worship and other gatherings...**

...Again and again I assure you that the work we are doing in the midst of this pandemic will become an integral part of our being the vital and courageous church when the pandemic is over. We pray fervently for that day. And we uphold one another and keep ourselves and others safe by our actions.

My next update will be published on Wednesday, August 12, 2020. Until then, pray with me as I pray for you!

In Christ,
Bishop Bob