

A Word from Our Pastor

Greetings in the name of the Lord! As I'm sure all of you are aware, Christian worship is a time of showing affection to one another as an expression of our love in Jesus Christ. But ever since the discovery of germs, viruses and bacteria, these expressions of affection have sometimes conflicted with our need to keep ourselves healthy in the church. For instance, did you know that the reason we take communion from little individual cups is because of the discovery of germs? Prior to this discovery, communion was always taken from a common cup. (Yes, even among Presbyterians!!)

As I write this, we are still in cold and flu season. During every cold and flu season, people have concerns about the practice of shaking hands both during the "Passing of the Peace" and after worship. But in addition to the cold and flu, current events are causing even more concern. The world is now facing the pandemic of the coronavirus for which there is no current cure. So, what should our policy be at Northminster and Calvary in light of these health concerns? Well, I will be discussing these matters with both Sessions when we meet again, but until then, here is the course of action I would like to take:

- For now, I don't see any need to discontinue the practice of shaking hands for those who are comfortable doing so during the Passing of the Peace and after worship. However, I wish to emphasize that this is "for now". I am aware that the coronavirus pandemic is a rapidly evolving situation and I am closely monitoring this situation. Should the coronavirus start spreading to our community, then we will obviously need to take greater precautions. These precautions may include not only cancelling the practice of shaking hands, but they could include cancelling worship altogether. I do not say this in order to cause alarm, but in order to reassure you that your Pastor and Session are taking this situation seriously.
- If you are uncomfortable shaking hands at any point in our worship, you should feel free to opt out of this practice. No one should pressure you into shaking hands if you are not comfortable doing so, and I can assure you that I will not be pressuring you into shaking my hand. I understand your need to feel safe comes first.
- If you are feeling sick in any way, please avoid coming to church on Sunday. We love you and we miss you when you are not here, but we also know that your sickness is only temporary and we will see you when you feel better.
- Please remember to wash your hands as frequently as possible, or use a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol content.

Finally, brothers and sisters in Christ, remember the bible tells us that "there is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out all fear." (First John 4:18) We should not live in fear as God's people, but being fearless does not mean throwing caution to the wind. Let us be cautious, but let us also put our trust in God who cares for us and loves us all.

Blessings in Christ,

Pastor Rich