



Arlington District Office
The United Methodist Church in Northern Virginia
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Thank you, Arlington District pastors, for your hard work on behalf of your congregations in a very difficult time. I know you have a lot coming at you, but I want to check in on a few things I had calls about, and then I invite you to call, email or text with specific needs or questions you may have:

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- **First, always follow your local authority's recommendations for group gatherings.** If they recommend limiting or cancelling group meetings, we, as part of our communities, should follow suit. In the absence of directives there, you and your church leadership are the ultimate deciders of how your church reacts to this crisis.
- Whatever you do **communicate it well.**
- **Pay attention to your own body and to your family.** Rest, take Sabbath, and do not ignore signs of illness. None of us want to be that poor Episcopalian priest who did not know he was sick, and managed to cause the shut down of his church, the quarantine of all his people, and ultimately the shut down of the entire Virginia Episcopal diocese.
- This is an opportunity to **check in and improve systems** you may have not considered or gotten time to explore: Consider online giving, online recording or livestreaming of worship and small groups, offsite work abilities. You might work on developing communications and a deeper leadership core to fill in for each other.
- Ask your church – **how can we be of help to our community during this time?** Can we help with childcare in some way? Can we help by adding online prayer times? Facebook groups? Can we make care packages for the quarantined? This is a wonderful opportunity to be creatively helpful in ways that have nothing to do with our building or worship.
- Looking ahead to **Easter, it would be best to start alternative planning now,** just in case. What if we were not together for Easter? What could connect our church in an age of quarantine and closures?
- **Let me know by text or email or call – my cell is 703-231-4297 if you decide not to have worship, or need ideas or resources from the District.**

Here is what we are doing at the District level, in case this helps you think things through:

- We are cancelling in person events of over 20 people, and moving as much as we can to zoom and to livestreaming. Like you, we are planning for the far side of this, so we will re-evaluate in two weeks. We, like many of you, are testing new technologies to make this all easier. Never waste a crisis; it has much to teach us!
- Our employees can work from home as they need to – we are leaving that decision to them. They are also reminded to stay home if they are at all sick.
- We are checking on whether or not our cleaning crews have what they need to clean properly, and also asking the justice question – do they have paid sick leave?

We are seeking to be as helpful and resourceful as possible to our community as we move through this – keeping the website updated, staying in connection with churches and pastors, and listening to what the Conference is asking of us, as well.

- Finally, you know my often-told advice: Stay calm, stay connected and stay on course with our ultimate mission. I am continuing to pray for each of you as leaders of our churches and as people in the midst of a crisis. Stay in touch and don't be afraid to ask for help.

Blessings on us all!

Arlington District Superintendent