Worship Together and At Home
COVID-19 resources for congregations
Prepared on March 17, 2020

“Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”
— PHILIPPIANS 4:6–7

As a community, the Christian church cherishes the times we gather in person around Word and Sacrament, meeting face-to-face and heart-to-heart. A virus that threatens public health also disturbs the fellowship we hold dear as congregations and individuals, and it makes it hard to hold or attend services and programs.

Church Health has prepared some tips for bringing our worshiping hearts to God even amid external circumstances that make us anxious and circumstances that limit in-person contact:

1. **Remember that God remains God.** We take science seriously, so keeping informed on the recommendations of the experts studying COVID-19 and how we can care for one another by following them makes sense, but we remember that God is our strong refuge and we rest in God.

2. **Remember that we are God’s people.** We do not judge another’s choice to stay home or attend worship, but rather hold one another close in our shared faith and think of each other’s good above our own because of our love for one another.

3. **Maintain our public witness.** We understand the threat of the virus, but because we are God’s people, fear does not control us. In our interactions with others, churches that choose to keep doors open to worship and our individual conversations, we can point to God as our shepherd and sustainer.

4. **Make practical changes.** Fingers and hands are the biggest way to spread a virus, so we look around at what everyone touches

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**COVID-19 Resources**
Congregations often first hear that our friends or church family members are sick through the congregational prayer chain, emails, or exchanging information on Sunday mornings. At a time when many members may be anxious about the potential impact of COVID-19, congregations can offer trustworthy information when questions arise and also help to slow the transmission of the virus. Church Health works closely with public health experts and health care partners to ensure we have the most reliable and current information available for our partners in faith:

**Websites:**
Shelby County Health Department
shelbytnhealth.com
Center for Disease Control:
cdc.gov
Tennessee Department of Health:
tn.gov/health.html

For more information, please contact Church Health’s Faith Community Engagement office at fce@churchhealth.org or visit ChurchHealth.Org.
and adapt our routines.
- Greet each other without shaking hands.
- Set the offering plate on a table by the door rather than pass it through the pews for everyone to touch.
- Let people pick up their own bulletins rather than have ushers pass them out, where fingers and hands may touch.
- Clean surfaces that many people may touch more frequently and more intensely, such as railings, tables, doorknobs, phones, keypads, cabinet doors, drinking fountains, and so on.

5. **Take no offense at space.** Choose seats at worship with several extra feet between us because to keep everyone safer. Our hearts are still knit closely.

6. **Make decisions about communion without judgment.** Since traditions vary, and so do individual comfort levels within traditions, we make space for one another.

7. **Continue to be faithful in worship at home if not attending in person is the best decision.** Use live-stream video of services (even if the church is not your own), radio broadcasts, favorite worship music, and devotional readings to keep our hearts centered on God’s guidance and calling.

8. **Keep centered on spiritual themes of peace, hope, and trust.** As messages of anxiety mount, stay grounded in the truth that God remains God. Here are some passages for reflection.
   - The Lord is our strength (Psalm 18:1–3)
   - The Lord is a stronghold (Psalm 9:9–11)
   - We trust in God our refuge (Psalm 62:5–8)
   - Cast your anxiety on God (1 Peter 5:7)
   - Hope in God (Psalm 43:4–5)
   - The God of hope fills us with peace (Romans 15:13)
   - The Lord speak peace to his people (Psalm 85:7–8)
   - The peace of God surpasses understanding (Philippians 4:6–7)

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The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.
And those who know your name put their trust in you, for you, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you.
Sing praises to the Lord, who dwells in Zion.
Declare his deeds among the peoples.
—Psalm 9:9–11

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