



Mechanic Grove Church of the Brethren

Continuing the Work of JesusPeacefully, Simply, Together

March 16, 2020

Dear Church Family,

As I'm writing to you, we are in the midst of unprecedented times. The very real threat of COVID-19 has resulted in shuttering schools across the state and the nation. Governor Wolf has encouraged large group gatherings to cancel or postpone, and our own leadership in the Atlantic Northeast District has encouraged churches to follow that mandate. In the midst of this situation, I believe it is important that we remember the words of 2 Timothy 1:7 – God has not given us a spirit of fear, but rather a spirit of power and of love.

In this letter, you will find information about cancelations and plans for events here at Mechanic Grove. I have also tried to include other related information that you may find helpful or which we want to make sure you're aware of. I am incredibly thankful to Dave Nichols, our moderator, Derrick Kreider, our church board chair, Phil Johnson, our vice-chair, Cinda Showalter, the chairperson of Ministry Commission, and other staff and volunteers who have contributed to quick planning over these days. In the midst of all of this, it is vital that we remember that God has given us a spirit of love, and we should continue to love our neighbors and reach out to them in appropriate ways. Even if our gathering together may be curtailed at the moment, we are still the church and we still have a mission to share Jesus' love with our neighbors. In this time, the words of the proposed compelling vision statement of the Church of the Brethren, calling us to be disciples who are "innovative, adaptable, and fearless" seem incredibly apropos.

Cancelations/Postponements

For our cancelations, we will follow the advice of the PA Department of Health. We also normally follow the Solanco School District for emergency closures and will continue to do so during this period. As a result, worship services and events at the church are canceled March 14-27. We will continue to monitor the situation and follow additional guidance as it is issued by the relevant authorities. In terms of our most popular events:

- Worship and Sunday School was canceled on March 15 and will be canceled again on March 22
- We will offer a live stream for worship at **9:30am on Sunday, March 22**, as we did last Sunday, March 15. This will be available on our Facebook page, and we are working to make it available on the church website as well. Last week's service can be seen here: <https://www.mgcb.org/live>
- WOW is canceled on March 18 and 25
- FlavorFest, scheduled for March 20 is *postponed* until May 30
- The Men's Banquet, scheduled for March 27, is *canceled*
- All youth ministry events previously scheduled for the period of March 14-27, are *canceled*
- Our Preschool, Primary Program, and CLASP follow the Solanco School District, and therefore those programs are closed through March 27

Office Hours

Your church staff will continue to be present in the office for normal office hours as much as possible (normal office hours are 8am-4pm). It is possible, due to school closures, that some of our staff may not be present when you would normally expect. If you have questions, please feel free to call the church

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office or email the relevant staff person. We love our church family and look forward to serving you during this time.

No Visitor Policies

While you are welcome to stop by the church office throughout the week as you normally might, many nursing homes, hospitals, and outpatient facilities have implemented no visitor policies. What this means is that *you cannot visit church members in the hospital or nursing homes as you normally would*. Even clergy are limited in the situations where we can visit at this point. Please be aware of this and strive to be diligent in lifting one another up in your regular, daily prayers. Phone calls are also a wonderful alternative.

Tithes and Offerings

You are welcome to place your offering check in the mail or drop it off by stopping by the church office. We have also accelerated our plans for online giving, and you may give online at the following link: <https://mgcb.breezechms.com/give/online>. Please note that giving with a credit/debit card does include a charge for the church of 2.9% the total transaction.

While we may not be meeting in-person for worship or other events during this time, we are still striving to minister to one another in a variety of ways. It is important that we continue to support the church budget, even though we may not be gathering at present. Your continued giving will allow us to work on innovative ideas for ministry during this time, but it will also allow us to resume all our normal ministry events when circumstances change.

Ministering to Others

It is vital that we continue to lift one another in prayer during this time. In addition, there are still many opportunities to minister to others. I want to encourage you to check on your neighbors, especially if they are in the highest risk groups for COVID-19. Use the extra time you may have because of canceled events to connect with family. Have a family game night or watch a movie together.

The Solanco Neighborhood Ministries is asking for the following items for the food bank; kindly consider dropping something off between the hours of 9am-4pm, Monday-Friday (SNM is located at 355 Buck Rd in Quarryville).

Pancake mix
syrup
boxes of cereal
large peanut butter
large jelly
loaf of bread
spaghetti
spaghetti sauce
cans of tuna
egg noodles
cans cream of mushroom soup
cans of chicken noodle soup
Box of granola bars/snack crackers

In addition, if you are in one of the most susceptible groups and are choosing to follow CDC guidelines and stay at home as much as possible, we have a couple folks who have volunteered to help out by picking up prescriptions at the pharmacy or bringing some groceries over. Please let me know if this assistance would be helpful to you.

Mechanic Grove has a committee that oversees a benevolence fund for members of the congregation with financial needs. Please be willing to share your needs, and know that your church wants to support you. If you have a financial need, please do not hesitate to contact the church office. We also recognize that social distancing—while helpful for flattening the curve of a disease—has the potential to bring emotional and spiritual difficulty. If you are in need of pastoral counsel during this time, do not hesitate to contact me.

If you have additional suggestions for how we can reach out to our neighbors and help them, please let me know.

Prayers

We encourage you to turn to God in prayer, and we are exploring ways to join in prayer together despite not being in the same physical space. We will continue to send out regular emails with prayer requests and updates. If you are not on our prayer list, please consider joining the list (<http://eepurl.com/gNWe95>). We encourage you to pray specifically for those who:

- Are more vulnerable and at risk in our community
- Depend on schools for food but whose schools are closed
- Work in vocations that make them more susceptible to infection
- Are providing care to the sick and making decisions about their schools or workplaces
- Have had plans upended or been forced to step away from jobs by moving away from campus
- Experience heightened racism or discrimination
- Need emotional, psychological, and spiritual support

One of the primary ways we will issue updates is through the email list, as well as on our church website and church Facebook page. We understand not everyone uses the internet, and so if you could share relevant information with those from your Sunday School class or small group who do not use the internet, that would be helpful.

May we each hold close to our hearts the words of Philippians 4:6-7, “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.” My friends, while we may be separate for a time, we are not alone. May we rely on God and may we continue to support and love one another. If you need someone to talk to, please do not hesitate to call my cell phone or shoot me an email. I love each one of you.

Grace & Peace

Pastor Calvin
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