

Dear Westend Congregation,

With confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Michigan this past week, including cases in Kent County late this week, we have witnessed sweeping changes and cancellations in order to prevent further spread of the illness. In consultation with health officials and in response to guidelines published by the state (<https://www.michigan.gov/Coronavirus>), all church activities, including worship, Westend Wednesday, and other group activities at our church building are suspended until March 23.

The decision to cancel services is not one we take lightly and is not one we make out of fear or panic. On the contrary, "As followers of Jesus Christ, living in this world - which some seek to control and others view with despair - we declare with joy and trust, 'Our world belongs to God!'"\* We also recognize, however, that we have a responsibility to one another and that there are practical steps such as social distancing, handwashing, and sanitizing shared surfaces that we can take to equip us to live out that care and concern - including, in extraordinary circumstances, not gathering with each other.

While we will not be gathering for worship, we can and will continue to be the body of Christ in the midst of these uncertain times. Church staff are working together to develop meaningful ways to engage us in worship, invite us to prayer, and to deliver Sunday's sermon to us through digital platforms and email. These will be posted on Sunday mornings to the church Facebook page throughout the duration of our closure. Additionally, we recognize that the actions being taken in our community are already having economic impacts. If there is a way that we can support you in this time, please contact your deacon. If you need spiritual support, reach out to Pastor Kory or your Shepherd Elder. We also encourage all members of our congregation to see this as an opportunity to put the love of Christ into action. Reach out to a friend or neighbor. Offer to buy groceries for an elderly couple.

We ground our actions in this time in the words of the Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 1:7: "For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline" (NLT).

We look forward to worshipping together again soon.

In Christ,

Mike Terrell  
Moderator of Council

\*Preamble of the Contemporary Testimony of the Christian Reformed Church