March 11, 2020
David Shirey
Important Update re. Coronavirus Precautions from Rev. David Shirey

Following Gov. Beshear’s announcement this morning asking Kentucky faith communities not to have worship services this Sunday, I held a meeting this afternoon with our staff (Mollie Sawyer, Michael Rintamaa, Minister of Youth, Children and Families Colin Pilkington, Communications Coordinator Clay Lester), members of our church’s leadership team including Board Chair Jan Ehrmantraut, Elder Secretary Brenda Peterson, Deacon Coordinator and Outreach Liaison Gail Kennedy, and health professionals Dr. Ardis Hoven and Parish Nurse Chair Rosemary Minnick.

After a vigorous discussion focused on discerning the most prudent way to conduct our church activities during this period of concern about the coronavirus, the following decisions were made:

[Our rationale for these decisions follow the list of postponements / cancellations]

**Wednesday Lenten Soup Suppers** are postponed until further notice. We fully intend on rescheduling this outstanding series.

**This Thursday’s (March 12) choir practice and handbell practice** is cancelled. Michael Rintamaa will communicate plans for coming weeks.

**Friday’s Psalms Class** is cancelled until further notice. David Shirey will communicate further information in weeks ahead.

**Saturday’s Men’s Breakfast** is cancelled.

**Saturday’s Pastor’s Class** will meet as planned at 10:30 a.m.

**We will not have our 8:30 am or 11 am worship services this Sunday morning, March 15, nor will we have Sunday School classes.** However, we will broadcast worship via Facebook Live at 11 am led by Rev. David Shirey, Michael Rintamaa, Colin Pilkington, and other guest leaders and musicians. We encourage you to tune in at home and experience this worship service live on Central Christian’s Facebook page. **We will make decisions about upcoming worship services on a week-by-week basis** as we learn more about the virus and how we can exercise precaution while at the same time seek to observe our regular and needed rhythm of work, rest, and worship.

Sunday afternoon **Kids-SING, Teen Sing, and Youth Groups** will proceed as scheduled, but you may look for further communications from Michael and Colin.

Our rationale for these decisions derives from three principles grounded in our faith mandate to love God and love our neighbor as ourselves. Simply stated, “In this circumstance, what does love require?”
1. **Love requires us to protect the vulnerable.** This virus puts the elderly and people with compromised health conditions at special risk. Like me, our congregation’s senior members are motivated by a fervent desire and unwavering commitment to worship God together. I and they will make every effort, regardless of the risk or cost, to be present for worship, feeling guilty if we do not make such an effort. Cancelling corporate worship this Sunday and offering a service available for home viewing safeguards our most vulnerable and relieves the deeply ingrained impetus to worship weekly.

2. **Love calls for us to seek the common good.** By voluntarily taking a sacrificial action such as cancelling corporate worship, we love our neighbors by doing our part to take an action that we hope will slow down the spread of the virus, thereby preventing as-yet-healthy persons from contracting the virus or making it easier for infected persons who may not yet know of the infection to spread it unknowingly to others.

3. **Love calls for us to act in solidarity with persons of good will.** Heeding the Governor’s request and heeding the best wisdom of public health officials, we join a community-, state-, nation- and worldwide coalition of concerted caring whose cooperative efforts will the well-being of all people.

4. **Love calls for actions that minimize regret.** If we were to proceed with events or activities that lead to the infection of persons or the unwitting spread of the virus, we would rue the decision to proceed with “business as usual” when we could have chosen otherwise. Though it is debatable whether faith communities cancelling their services this weekend will indeed make a difference for the good, we can proceed with this decision knowing we did not choose to disregard or ignore this call for vigilance and caution. We can and will reevaluate next Wednesday as new and pertinent information reaches us.

Until then, please do worship with us online this Sunday, continue to pray for medical, government, and civic leaders, and for the wisdom, compassion, and perseverance to stay the spread of this virus. Though we are deep into Lent, we are always and ultimately a resurrection people. Great is God’s faithfulness.

PS: Our desire to live out a love that protects the vulnerable also means **we are committed to serve our hungry neighbors through God’s Pantry.** Absent our caring provision of food, our God’s Pantry clients are vulnerable to both hunger and infection. However, since many of our God’s Pantry volunteers are seniors who are themselves vulnerable to virus and may choose to step back from serving during this time period, we are actively seeking younger persons (60 and under) who may be able to serve as a volunteer for the next weeks. Please call the church office if you are available to serve at 859-233-1551. If / when we hear a change of protocol from God’s Pantry headquarters, we will adjust accordingly.