

A Pastoral Message

Dear Church:

This morning, I am wondering how we are positioned in faith and action as we continue to wait and watch during this pandemic? As of last evening, the number of infections escalated to 1186 cases in 78 counties, with seven deaths statewide. The line measuring the number impacted is still spiking upward. Additionally, limited test kits, medical supplies, and equipment slow down the process of curving the spike. On Friday, Governor Cooper, issued a 30-Day Stay-At-Home Order effective at 5 pm today. Currently, global health news is not good!

What gives me further pause is the idea that even one member of our faith community might die because the seriousness of this pandemic was not realized. I have been troubled because some Disciples have not fully adhered to social-distancing. And so, with a deep love for each of you, I am strongly urging you to hunker down and remain at home except for the specified reasons (see attached Governor's Executive Order).

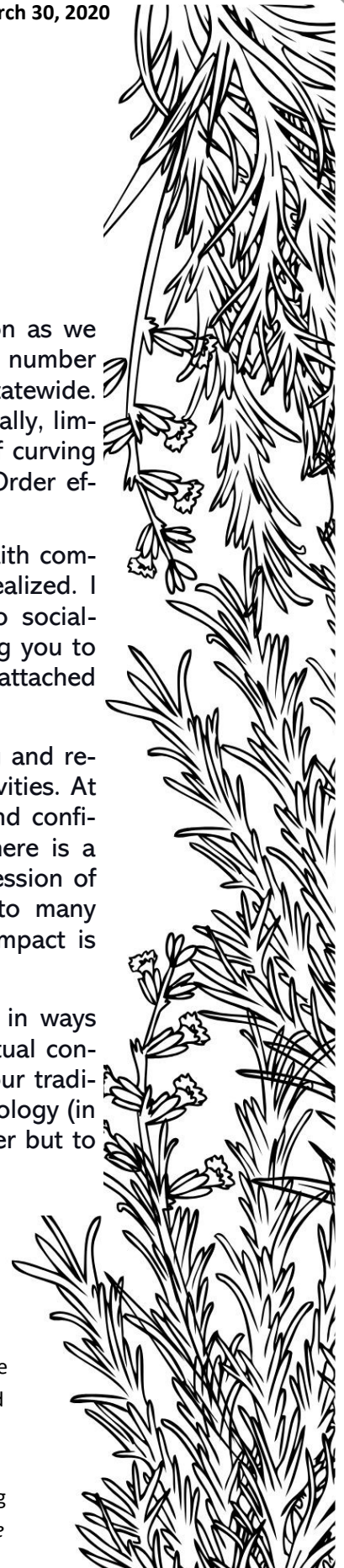
Thank God, there is some good news! There seems to be a repositioning and reframing of how we are the church, as opposed to just doing church activities. At this moment, Disciples are standing even more firmly upon their faith and confidence in God. As I visit virtual worship, study, and outreach events, there is a poignant honesty in sermons expressing how uncertainty feels and confession of frustration over the lack of answers. This empathy provides support to many whose emotions are overwhelmed. Acknowledging the facts and their impact is linked to encouragement and hope that inspires trust.

Additionally, I have witnessed outreach to the '*least of these*' continue in ways that respect the social-distancing mandate. Somehow, this increasing virtual connection is strengthening the Body of Christ, while causing us to rethink our traditions and practices for ministry. For some of us, the employment of technology (in some form) might be our new normal. Not just to communicate and gather but to be the church.



Be a good citizen. All governments are under God. Insofar as there is peace and order, it's God's order. So live responsibly as a citizen. If you're irresponsible to the state, then you're irresponsible with God, and God will hold you responsible. Duly constituted authorities are only a threat if you're trying to get by with something. Decent citizens should have nothing to fear.

Romans 13: 1-3 *The Message Bible*



At this moment, I encourage each congregation to ask a hard question. Are the mission, purpose, and methods of the ministry for our church still relevant? If the answer is yes, please respond to the fresh wind of the Holy Spirit to reposition and reframe how you will enliven the mission, purpose, and methods for ministry as you move forward. Our posture for ministry as we emerge from this crisis could predict our future. An insightful colleague said it best, "*we must not waste this crisis.*"

With Your Safety and Health in Mind,
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