



# Tecumseh United Methodist Church

Christ's compassionate community in Tecumseh;  
Loving and serving prayerfully and unconditionally  
Rev. Mark Alan Miller, pastor

20 March 2020

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ

As my wife Sharon and I both noticed, this week feels as if it has lasted months. This quirk of perception has nothing to do with the passage of time, which is as it always has been. Rather, it is the breathtaking pace of change since last Thursday that has “lengthened” our days. It was just last Friday morning when we enjoyed breakfast *inside* a restaurant in Grand Rapids following the previous day’s visit to Meijer Gardens. Today, our own Tecumseh Brewing Co. is inviting customers to take home a bottle of their brew and join them remotely on Facebook Live for a virtual happy hour this evening.

Thanks and praise to God that God does not change. God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is the same now as ever. God is truly that solid rock upon which we stand.

This is not to say that all that God has created and ordained does not flex and adjust to change in the world, and we are experiencing a profound adaptation now with the church. Never before have we had to be the church while unable to gather in physical community. There have always been a few at the edges of our fellowship who are distant from us—our shut-ins and homebound brothers and sisters. But now, due to social distancing, *we are all shut-ins and homebound*. And this is pushing us to “do church” in new ways.

To be honest, I am struggling to sort out how I do my job when I cannot be among the gathered worshipers on Wednesday evening and Sunday morning, attend meetings (which I do not miss as much), participate in handbell and choir rehearsals (which I do miss), and be with those in the hospital (clergy were asked to suspend hospital visits earlier this week, which is wise as none of us wants to accidentally wander the Coronavirus around the sick should we pick it up). For some reason, I missed the class in Pandemic Social Distancing for Pastors in seminary.

I am working in several directions at once to put in place ways we can remain connected to church, worship, and each other as the church community and ask for your grace and patience as I pull things together and try new things. Even more, I ask for your engagement and participation, especially if you have access to the internet.

The following has already been done or is being developed:

- There is now a page on our website entitled “Online Church” for information, announcements, links to my communications, and podcasts of worship and daily prayer. It is at [http://www.tecumsehumc.org/online\\_church.html](http://www.tecumsehumc.org/online_church.html).

- Worship podcasts (2 each week). These are audio recordings of a Bible reading, message, prayer, and music. I realize that other churches are live-streaming video of their worship, but, while I could put my iPhone on a tripod and stand in front of it, I find it awkward doing so by myself since we cannot gather the choir, organist, and liturgists together right now. For now, I will stick with audio podcasting.
- Daily Prayer. These will be audio podcasts as well offering a brief liturgy and prayer for the day. Both daily prayer and worship podcasts will have a virtual bulletin so you can follow along.
- Facebook. We have a Facebook page and I have been and will continue to use it. At present, it functions as a kind of electronic bulletin board for announcements. I hope to exploit more of its functions to do more interactively.
- ZOOM. This tool is used to facilitate virtual meetings. A group of people can meet on screen from wherever they are. Very soon we will try this as the free version allows up to 40 minute meetings of up to 100 participants.
- We have a prayer chain and we shall continue to use it. Call either Deb Blanden (ph: 517-423-6004) or Bonnie Greene (ph: 517-902-5217) to place a concern on the chain.
- Online Offering. We will provide a way to give to the church from our website. Please stay tuned—we are just getting started with this.

That last bullet is also a reminder . . . Please continue to support Tecumseh UMC financially. Not being able to gather has not stopped our need to keep the lights on and pay our staff (and pastor). Thank you!

There is one more important thing to attend to: Most of the bullet items listed above require a computer (or pad or smartphone) and internet access. Some of us do not have this capability. We need to do something to make sure we are not further isolating people.

You may notice that I just used the word “we.” Even as I engineer ways to connect using technology available to us, I cannot hold our church together by myself. **We** need to stay connected and engaged with each other and **we** need to work together to maintain the vitality of our church.

Keep in touch. Keep the faith. And may God’s peace infuse all of us as we stand firm on the rock of Christ . . .

. . . Pastor Mark