



March 12, 2020

Dear members, friends, and guests of Presbyterian Church of the Master,

As most of you know, this morning Gov. Gavin Newsom [enacted emergency measures](#) in California because of COVID-19 coronavirus. These include banning gatherings of more than 250 people and requiring social distancing of staying at least six feet apart in all smaller gatherings. Now that the virus is circulating nearby, both the CDC and the WHO recommend these tactics to slow—and hopefully eventually stop—its spread. These measures will also serve to help ensure that [our healthcare system doesn't become overwhelmed](#) with a large influx of those needing emergency care.

Along with our elders and staff, we have been prayerfully discerning how to respond in light of the governor's mandate. On the one hand, we feel strongly the call to preach and live out one of Scripture's most frequent commands: "Do not be afraid." Our culture tends to push us towards fear and anxiety. Yet it is precisely in times such as these that followers of Jesus are called to shine forth with courage and hope. As 1 Peter 1:3-4 reminds us, through Jesus we have been given a "living hope" that can "never perish, spoil, or fade." We stand on this hope with unshaken confidence; Jesus *will* see us through this. On this truth we can stake our lives with full assurance.

In every season of the church's life, however, there is the task of discerning what the courage and hope of Jesus look like at the specific moment in which we find ourselves. As your pastors, the more we considered our call as shepherds of those entrusted to our care, the more we felt compelled to err on the side of caution. In particular, we especially have in mind those in our midst who are most vulnerable to this infection: those who are older than 60. This is not a nameless group of people. Most of us can envision one of these beloved people easily. Indeed, some of these people are our founding members; we would not be here on the corner of Marguerite and Oso without them.

Accordingly, in a desire to care for these members especially—and indeed also to comply with the state's mandates—**we are officially cancelling in-person worship and all church meetings and events effective March 13, 2020.** This includes our Sunday gatherings as well as our weekday church, youth, children's, and community events. Funerals, weddings, and other large gatherings are also postponed. Our church office will remain open in a limited capacity for pastoral support.

In addition, our preschool will remain open until further guidance regarding schools/pre-schools is given by the state of California's public health officials.

We imagine that this news will bring up a mix of difficult emotions for each of you—disappointment, frustration, loneliness, anxiety, fear, and perhaps even a bit of relief that



you don't need to weigh whether to come to our weekly worship gatherings or not. These feelings are all understandable and normal. Whether any among us end up getting sick or not, we will feel the disruption in our daily lives, and taking a hiatus from our worship gatherings in person is a deep sadness for us all, your pastors included.

That said, this is an important time to remember that church is not a building; it's God's people. As Paul writes in 1 Cor. 12:27, "You are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it." *You* are the church! *We* are the church! Though we won't be gathering together in person for a time, we want to offer the following ways of staying connected with God and one another:

- **All updates will be posted to our website: [www.mypcom.com](http://www.mypcom.com)**
- **We are working to develop an online worship experience. Details to follow.**
- **Check out PCOM's new daily podcast, beginning this Friday, March 13:**
  - [www.mypcom.com/podcast](http://www.mypcom.com/podcast)
- **Memorize Psalm 91, a Psalm of comfort in God's presence, which will be a central focus in our daily podcast.**
- **And connect with each other over on our church [Facebook](#) page**

We also encourage each of our members to serve one another by reaching out via phone, email, or text to those in their neighborhood and social circles to help ensure that everyone has what they need to get through these days. Check in on those you love and those near to you. Offer to purchase and drop off groceries or medical supplies, hold daily phone calls, or check in regularly via text or email.

In addition, over the next day or two, we will establish a call forwarding system in order to make pastoral care directly available by calling the church's main phone line: 949-582-2670. Jackson, Courtney, Daryl, Dee, and Carol will all be available to offer support. We're grateful for your patience as we work to set up this system.

The rest of our staff will be checking in on those in their areas—children, youth, college students, adults, etc.—to make sure everyone is folded into our updated communications and care.

Finally, and most importantly: While we are enacting these measures out of a desire to pursue wisdom and provide care, this is a time to remain rooted in our hope and confidence in Christ. Our comfort, as the Heidelberg Catechism so beautifully puts it, is that



“I am not my own, but belong with body and soul, both in life and in death, to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ.”

We will continue to monitor the situation as things unfold. Again, our church website will our most updated information so please check it often.

In Christ's love and peace,

*Paula*      *DARYL*      *Courtney*

**Other helpful resources:**

- [California Department of Public Health](#)
- [Orange County Public Health Information](#)
- [Advice for Churches from the Surgeon General](#)
- [CDC COVID-19 updates](#)
- [CDC New travel alerts](#)
- [World Health Organization updates](#)
- [WHO Preparedness resources](#)