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## RECOMMENDATION

On Monday, March 16, Grace Presbytery Council voted unanimously to pass the following motion in an effort to slow the rate of COVID-19 infection and to keep our churches as safe as possible.

*(They) Recommended to sessions within Grace Presbytery that all face-to-face church gatherings be suspended, including worship services, until public health officials advise it is safe to resume group gatherings.*

In compliance with this recommendation, your Session has voted to cancel all church activities, including worship services and choir rehearsals, through the end of March. We will meet again before the first Sunday in April to assess the situation and will make decisions for that month, which includes Holy Week, at that time.

In the meantime, we will undertake efforts to keep you informed and engaged as we practice this new social distancing. That will not be easy for our friendly, loving, sharing congregation. You will be hearing personally from Session members and Rev. Kathy will be sending routine messages, prayers, and even some mini-sermons. We will stay in touch by telephone and email. If you use social media, look for posts on Facebook and Instagram and check our website, as we will try to keep those communication channels updated as well.

[Presbyterian Disaster Assistance](#) (PDA) has released a “[Preparedness for Pandemics](#)” guide that contains commonsense measures that churches and individuals can take to keep themselves and their communities safe. Some of those measures include:

- Participate in worship and other church activities to your own level of comfort.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Wash your hands regularly and supplement with alcohol-based hand sanitizers.
- Avoid touching your face.

The Preparedness for Pandemics guide can be found [here](#) .

## A word of prayer from the 223rd GA Co-Moderators for these uncertain times...

Eternal God, sustainer, provider, God of all wisdom and knowledge,  
Our spirits are weary, our faith quivers, our minds get clouded by news of sickness and death.  
You know our thoughts before we express them, even the fears we dismiss, you know them.  
We cannot hide our feelings and worries from you.  
So, as we are, we come to You, O God, asking for wisdom, for clear minds and open hearts, for calm and assurance that, through the crisis, You are present.

Knowing that “the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words,”

We ask for wisdom and protection...

For medical personnel, scientists, doctors, nurses, and laboratory technicians.

For those around the world considering current and other health crises.

For health care personnel and caregivers.

We lift them up to You. Bendíceles con sabiduría; protégeles de todo mal.

We ask for clear minds and open hearts as people navigate daily lives...

As closures, cancellations, and quarantines are enacted.

As families gather in their homes, some caring for those who are sick.

As we encounter neighbors in our neighborhoods, stores, and pharmacies.

Bendícenos con paciencia y creatividad, amor y entendimiento.

We pray for the sick, those who have lost or are at risk of losing jobs in the midst of this crisis, for those whose health or social services will be or have been affected, for those suffering the direct effects of this virus, locally and around the world.

Illumine us, Holy Spirit. Show us in what ways we can be of help as we care for self and others.

Ilumínanos para saber cómo ayudar.

We ask for calm, assurance, and strength.

May we all remember that, in the midst of any crisis,

Your grace reaches us,

Your hope enlightens us,

And Your love surrounds us all.

En medio de la crisis,  
tu gracia nos alcanza,  
tu esperanza nos ilumina,  
y tu amor nos rodea.

Amén.

(Vilmarie and Cindy, March 14, 2020)



*Ruling Elder Vilmarie Cintrón-Olivieri (left) and Rev. Cindy Kohlmann (right), Co-Moderators of the 223rd General Assembly (2018). Photo by Michael Whitman*

**AUTHORS:** Vilmarie Cintrón-Olivieri and the Rev. Cindy Kohlmann

**Beginning Monday, March 16, Helping Hands Ministry will be closed to the public and will be offering home delivery of groceries to local families in need.**

### **IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO VOLUNTEER:**

- To make sure we can meet the needs of families in our community, **we need your help more than ever.**
- We are looking for at least **100 volunteers** to do home deliveries in the coming weeks.
- If you are interested in finding out details or signing up to volunteer, please contact Bekah Prince, Operations Manager, at [bekah@helpinghandsbelton.org](mailto:bekah@helpinghandsbelton.org) or 817.319.7970.

### **Ideas to be FOR your community during COVID-19**

By Jeff Henderson, pastor and Founder of the FOR Company . His article can be found on *Sunday Mag* online at [https://www.sundaymag.tv/4-ideas-to-be-for-your-community-during-covid-19/?mc\\_cid=9d395a431d](https://www.sundaymag.tv/4-ideas-to-be-for-your-community-during-covid-19/?mc_cid=9d395a431d)

Rev. Henderson suggests:

“Social Distancing doesn’t mean we can’t help. In fact, **now is our moment.**

Now is our moment to bring hope, strength, and peace.

We can act. We can lead. We can serve.

So, let’s do this together.”

Some of his ideas , as written in his article, include:

#### **1. Buying online gift cards to support local businesses.**

He is featuring local business leaders on his Instagram page and asking people to support them by purchasing online gift cards. The downside of this idea is that not every business has an e-commerce option and it doesn’t apply to every business. This is a great way to help restaurants , movie theaters, and other local retail businesses who are seeing a decline in customers. Gift cards provide income now for services we can use later.

#### **2. Support your local food bank.**

School closures are impacting children who depend on lunch programs. Helping Hands is working to assist those families. We can look for other opportunities to help those in our community who lack access to food.

#### **3. Five Phone Calls a Day.**

He is asking the team at his church to call five people in the church a day as a way to check-in and to ask how they can pray for them. These phone calls are an important way to pastor and shepherd people while also abiding by social distancing protocols.

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### **How else can we serve, bring hope and show that we care?**

In closing, from Jill Duffield, editor of *The Presbyterian Outlook*,

“May the peace of Christ be with you and may God use this crisis as an occasion to bring us closer, increase our care for each other and show the world we are Christians through our love.”