



Macedonia Baptist Church

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Rev. Leonard D. Comithier Jr., Pastor

Macedonia and COVID-19

(Update #4 – April 2, 2020)

COVID-19 is described as a “lonely disease,” and if you read the news you can understand why. You’ve seen pictures of and read about loved ones being separated when entering a hospital regardless of the reason, i.e. pregnancy and delivery, injury or life and death illness, because there can be no visitors. The news is filled with pictures of people in apartment windows looking out on vacant streets. The government has told everyone to stay home with restrictions in place to limit our ability to be near anyone (social distancing meaning no closer than 6 feet) if we are in public space. So, what can we as a community of faith do to reduce the feelings of isolation people are beginning to experience? How can we be our brother’s and sister’s keeper when we cannot be with our brothers and sisters?

Our Christianity points us to our faith as the source of strength and comfort during this time of COVID-19. Although we may be physically separated, we are spiritually connected. We see the Lord as our rock and fortress and deliverer. God is our strength and it is in Him we trust. He is our buckler and horn of salvation and high tower. (Psalms 18:2) With that fortification we take our faith wherever we are and share it through whatever means are available to us. In today’s parlance that means reaching out using technology to stay in touch with others via our various devices using talk, text, email, or video chats. For some it might mean writing a note to put in the mail. It means using the depth of your faith to help someone else. There are multitudes of ways to help someone else, such as online volunteering or hosting a virtual get-together to lift everyone’s spirits, reading the Bible to someone over the phone, or using your online skills to shop for or teaching someone else how to shop using the internet in this time of confinement.

The Deacons of Macedonia host **Prayer Sessions at 6:30 a.m., 12:00 Noon and 6:00 p.m. on Wednesdays.** They have also just added a session on **Sundays at 7:00 p.m.** Anyone can join by **calling (515) 604-9099** and using **access code 608-127-884**. The Prayer Sessions connect us to each other and to God. It’s connections that push isolation and loneliness away.

We encourage everyone to continue to be mindful of the basic safety procedures established by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC)ⁱ

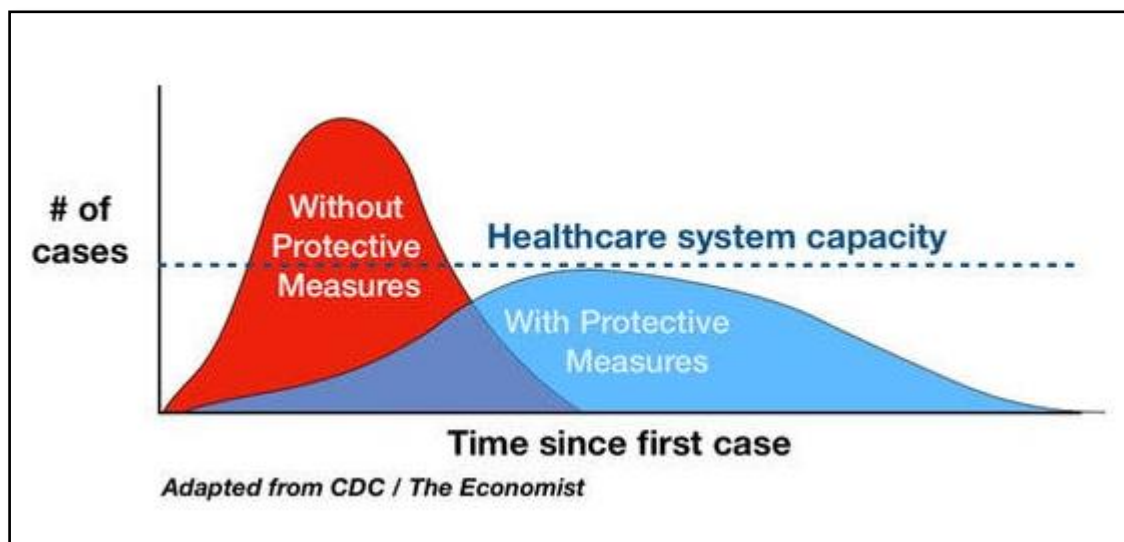
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Sneeze or cough into a tissue if available or the crook of your elbow, not your hands. Toss any used tissue. Wash immediately after coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose.
- Avoid touching your face, especially your mouth, nose and eyes, with unwashed hands.
- Frequently disinfect surfaces touched including keyboards, desktops, cell phones, elevator buttons, doorknobs, handrails and remote controls.
- Use hand sanitizer that is, at least, 60% alcohol.
- Avoid close contact with anyone who has flu-like symptoms.
- Stay home if you have flu-like-symptoms.

- If you must go out, practice “social distancing” which means not being within 6 feet of another person.
- Hold any gatherings of 10 or more people virtually or not at all.

In keeping with CDC recommendations, Macedonia will have livestreamed worship only at 11:00 a.m. on Sundays until further notice. The church will not be open. The closing of the church also applies to Sunday School, Bible Study, New Member Classes, and all internal and external meetings. Pastor and the Workgroup will update communications accordingly with any changes.

COVID-19: Flattening the Curve

“Flattening the Curve.” The phrase is used in almost every news report and print article in relation to the rate of spreading COVID-19. “In epidemiology, the idea of slowing a virus’ spread so that fewer people need to seek treatment at any given time is known as ‘flattening the curve.’”ⁱⁱⁱ Epidemiologists study disease (such as epidemics) by analyzing who is affected, when and where a disease strikes, the pattern of occurrence, and other factors related to health. Epidemiology is the basis for public health. The ideal goal in fighting an epidemic/pandemic is to completely stop the spread, but that goal is typically unrealistic given that the disease is often new (novel coronavirus). The best approach in fighting a pandemic is to slow the spread. This is where the reference to “curve” comes into play. Let’s look at a curveⁱⁱⁱ:



The middle, dotted line represents how many hospital beds are available to treat seriously infected patients. The vertical line on the left represents the number of confirmed and seriously ill cases (patients). The bottom horizontal line represents time since the identification of the first case.

- If no protective measures, such as staying home, hand washing for 20 seconds, social distancing if in public space, disinfecting, etc., are put in place, the number of cases increases extremely quickly overloading the healthcare system. The steep rise (the red curve) means the disease reaches the highest number of cases within the initial few weeks of the outbreak, peaks and then cases decrease almost equally fast. The initial steep rise in the curve, however, results

in the healthcare system being overwhelmed and lacking in resources to care for the numbers of infected people. Often there are insufficient supplies such as ventilators and respirators.

- If protective measures are put in place (the blue curve), although the same number of people become infected, it occurs over a longer period of time. A slower rate in the spread of the infection means there are fewer people infected at any time during the outbreak. The flattened curve means we have “a less stressed healthcare system...and fewer sick people being turned away.”^{iv}

In keeping with the Governor of New York, Macedonia encourages everyone to “stay home,” unless it is absolutely necessary to go out. If you must go out, practice social distancing and be sure to keep your hands away from your face, especially your eyes, nose and mouth.

Children: Education While at Home

School closures are now part of our national fabric and something parents must contend with each day. At first, children (and to some degree parents) may view this time as “vacation” and are happy not to have to go to school. However, as the time period extends and daily education rituals do not return, children and parents often find themselves in a quandary which could result in tension related to what academic subject to work on, when and how. Fortunately, there are a ton of resources available to support parents in filling the critical role of teacher during this time.

First, and foremost, check your school district’s website for academic guidance and materials for all grade levels and subjects, as well as specific guidance for students with disabilities and other special needs. In addition, some districts have also distributed internet devices, such as Chromebooks, to students who otherwise may not have access to computers or the internet during this time of school closure.

Second, create a space/place at home for children to do schoolwork. Granted every family’s living arrangement is different; however, try to create a specific place where your child(ren) can focus on learning. That space will be different for an elementary student and a high school student, but make sure the necessary tools are available, such as paper, pens/pencils, crayons, tape, folders, and rulers. Make sure there is sufficient lighting to read clearly. If possible, provide some type of hard surface for writing with a comfortable chair. Creating a dedicated space for your child(ren) to work will also contribute to his/her sense of stability during this uncertain time.

Third, Debra Ross, publisher of KidsOutAndAbout.com and a former homeschooler of two young adults wrote an article entitled, “*Surprise! You’re Homeschooling! Here are some tips.*” Her article provides a succinct overview of what’s important in terms of education and your child(ren)’s development during this time. She starts with “It’s going to be fine. You got this.” Take a moment to read about what to keep in mind for elementary, middle and high school students, roles and attitudes, establishing a routine, focusing on the basics and more.

<https://albany.kidsoutandabout.com/content/surprise-youre-homeschooling-here-are-some-tips>

We asked some of the educators within Macedonia (Dr. Gretchel Hathaway, Dr. Debra Nazon, Dr. Tammy Robinson, and Dr. Betty Shadrack) to name their top tips and/or resources for parents in supporting learning at home. The suggested resources are included in a special “**Educational**

Supports and Resources” section of the “Resources Available to You” document. However, here are some of the tips:

- Expose your child to a wealth of diverse books and literature. Emphasize the liberating power of reading and encourage your child to read daily. Model the importance of reading by sitting with your child(ren) and reading together.
- Broaden your child’s intellect by challenging him or her to think, question, write or journal and to ask and seek answers to the fundamental questions of what, where, when, why and how.
- Integrate other subjects into reading time, i.e. mathematics, science, music, art and history. This interdisciplinary experience will enrich the child’s worldview and expand his or her acquisition of knowledge^v
- Children are accustomed to a schedule at school. Schedules take the guesswork out of “what are we going to do now?” Given that parents are now often working remotely from home, that question asked repeatedly throughout the day could become tedious. So, take a bit of time to lay out a basic schedule that provides times for schoolwork (literary skills – reading/writing, math, science and social studies), and time for play or free time (analogous to “recess”). Ask your child when during the day they worked on each subject. You do not need to duplicate the school schedule but keeping academics near the time children are used to working on that subject can create some consistency.^{vi}

If you have access to a computer with internet connectivity, there are dozens of sites to provide materials and directions. **But what if you don’t have access to a computer with internet connectivity? What can you do to support your child(ren)’s learning?**

- Use whatever schoolbooks and materials your children brought home from school. Ask your child where the class stopped and start there.
- Use newspapers and magazines to provide additional reading sources that can be used to provoke thought and allow you to engage in discussions regarding content.
- Have children assist you in cooking/measuring (math) and other do-it-yourself projects around the house. Perhaps, let your child read the directions to you.
- Read a book together, discuss it and have your child write about it.
- What can your child teach you? You might be surprised at his or her knowledge and skills in a specific area. Find out what interests your child(ren) and have them create and make a presentation to you about it^{vii}

Finally, in addition, for the Capital Region there is one website every parent should have on their “Favorites” list: <https://albany.kidsoutandabout.com/> This website will provide you with information and links to a variety of virtual (online) experiences in New York State to supplement your child(ren)’s academic work.

If you have questions regarding COVID-19, contact the CDC at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus or the New York State Department of Health Coronavirus Hotline at (888) 364-3065 or go to www.ny.gov/coronavirus

Keeping Up Church Operations and Programs

In order to continue to maintain our edifice and the programs that Macedonia provides and supports, there are two options to continue contributing your tithes and offering: Online donations or by check. *The church prefers the use of “Online Giving” as it is a direct transfer from you to the church.* To use the online options, follow these steps:

- Go to the website at: www.macedoniaofalbany.org
- Click **“Giving”** - on the following window, scroll down to select either:
 - **“Online Giving”** which allows you to give using a debit or credit card or through your bank.
 - **“Donate”** which allows you to give using PayPal, debit or credit card. *Be aware that PayPal requires a third party to transfer funds to the church.*
- If you choose the “Online Giving” option, you will have the opportunity to select whether you want to create an account or give as a guest.
- For either option you choose, after you submit you will see a screen indicating your donation was received and receive an email acknowledging your donation.

For those who prefer to contribute by check, you may send your tithes and offerings through the mail. Be sure to address your envelope to:

**Macedonia Baptist Church
26 Wilson Ave.
Albany, NY 12205**

If you have an offering envelope at home, you will notice that it is pre-addressed. You can simply enclose your check; seal the envelope; add a stamp; and place it in the mail. **DO NOT MAIL CASH!**

We will continue to be alert to our everchanging landscape, but we will also continue to hold God’s unchanging hand for we are a people of faith. And remember “...perfect love casteth out fear...” (1 John 4:18)

DISCLAIMER

The information contained in the E-news and otherwise disseminated by Macedonia Baptist Church and its authorized agents concerning COVID-19 (Coronavirus) are for informational purposes only. The content is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified healthcare provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition or precautions appropriate for your specific circumstances. Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information provided as of the date of the content issued, however, due to the unprecedented nature of the current public health emergency and rapidly changing guidance, please consult with your physician or qualified healthcare provider and/or the reputable resources listed for the latest changes.

ⁱ *Former CDC director: There's a long war ahead and our Covid-19 response must adapt*” by Dr. Tom Frieden

ⁱⁱ “*Coronavirus: What is ‘flattening the curve,’ and will it work?*” by Brandon Specktor. LiveScience <https://www.livescience.com/coronavirus-flatten-the-curve.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ “*What does it mean to “flatten the curve”?*” by Siobhan Roberts, March 27, 2020. New York Times Science section <https://www.nytimes.com/article/flatten-curve-coronavirus.html>

^{iv} *Coronavirus: What is ‘flattening the curve,’ and will it work?*” by Brandon Specktor. LiveScience <https://www.livescience.com/coronavirus-flatten-the-curve.html>

^v Dr. Betty Shadrick

^{vi} Dr. Jennifer G. Sneed

^{vii} Ditto.