



Macedonia Baptist Church

26 Wilson Avenue • Albany, NY 12205

Tel: (518) 489-4370 • Fax: (518) 489-3414 • www.macedoniaofalbany.org

Rev. Leonard D. Comithier Jr., Pastor

Macedonia and COVID-19

(Update #6 – April 16, 2020)

Introduction: What is the COVID-19 Workgroup Talking About?

The COVID-19 Workgroup continued to ruminate this week on the racial disparity in the diagnosis, treatment and deaths of people of color, especially African American, from the COVID-19 virus. This issue remains a primary topic in the daily news cycles at this point with several politicians vowing to continue to press to make the collection, analysis and publication of data by race and other demographic factors a priority. That data is critical to identifying which communities the virus has impacted most significantly, seeing the path the virus has traveled/is traveling and at what rate, assessing where resources need to be allocated most immediately and moving forward, and understanding the factors that contribute to being more/less susceptible to infection by the virus.

In addition, the Workgroup looked across the spectrum of how COVID-19 has changed how we deal with the daily routines of life and where we are in terms of settling into a “new normal.” Given that many of us have more time now, it can be seen as a blessing because it allows us to consider how we, as individuals, can help others. The COVID-19 outbreak has forced all of us to revisit how we go about the daily routines of life, such as grocery shopping, paying bills, filing claims for unemployment and obtaining assistance for other services. After this experience with COVID-19, it seems that most of us will not view an outing to a public place in the same light as prior to the outbreak. Social distancing and face coverings may be part of our “new normal”.

It remains important to continue following these 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 and Grief

COVID-19 has completely changed the face of how we deal with grief. Previously when a loved one transitioned, the bereaved individual or family was surrounded by family and friends who offered support as the planning of a service took place. There was a homegoing service (or whatever the religious or ethnic tradition called for) where family and friends came together to remember and honor the individual, to pay tribute to his or her life. Then there was time for a repast following the service where laughter, hugs and an inexhaustible supply of stories were shared. All of these rituals gave people closure and a sense that it was okay to take a breath and move on with life, although in an altered manner.

As was noted in the #4 Update of April 2, 2020, the social distancing and hospital visitation restrictions significantly contribute to COVID-19 being described as the “lonely disease.” The loneliness is most apparent when a loved one is hospitalized, and no one can visit him or her. If that loved one passes, that loneliness is often amplified and may result in guilt for not being present or having the opportunity to share emotions or to hold a hand/give a hug. “Being less able to receive in-person support from friends and family, potentially leading to a greater sense of isolation and loneliness.”ⁱⁱ

Pastor reminds us that feelings are facts and grief is real. To face life in the presence of grief and loss, stay in the Word because you find yourself in the Word. What is offered in this Update concerning dealing with grief and loss has been tried, tested and found true.

If you want assurance that God will give you victory even **now**, Pastor recommends reading about Gideon in the book of Judges. If you want to see how God gives new life after loss, he says to read about Naomi in the book of Ruth. We gain further support through the gifts of some of the members of Macedonia who have knowledge and experience in this area. The following question was posed to Rev. Michele Chavers, Dr. Janice Pride-Boone, Rev. Dr. Johnny Turner and Sis. Doris Bourgeois Turner: **What can we do to help deal with the grief we experience personally or that someone close to us experiences when a loved one passes as the result of COVID-19 or from another illness during this time of COVID-19 restrictions?** Their responses offer suggestions that you may find helpful.

Dr. Pride-Boone wants to ensure that everyone reading this Update is aware that we each have four areas to take care to remain totally healthy. She said, “each of us needs to take care of ourselves *cognitively, emotionally, spiritually and physically.*” She refers to each area as a “house.” In other words, we need to take care of our houses each day.

Cognitively – do something to stimulate your brain. For some that is reading and taking in as many facts as possible about COVID-19. The facts allow you to manage the disease.

Emotionally – Think about the five stages of grief identified by Elisabeth Kubler Rossⁱⁱⁱ: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. Where are you on that scale? Wherever you are, do something to address it. For example, if you are depressed, don't be depressed alone. Talk to a friend, a doctor, a counselor about your feelings. "Feelings are there for a reason." Use whatever avenue is available to you – phone, ZOOM, telehealth.

Spiritually – Feed your spiritual self. Look back at sermons (available on the Macedonia website.) Read the Bible. Keep a diary. Pray. Meditate. Spend, at least, 20 minutes each day with God, and allow that connection to keep your spiritual self strong.

Physically – Our bodies have some basic needs to remain healthy:

- Eat a healthy diet (Careful not to gain the "COVID-20 (pounds))
- Get enough sleep (When you don't need an alarm clock to wake up)
- Exercise (Be active for, at least, 30 minutes)
- Tree Therapy (Get outside; be around trees, plants, spring foliage)
- Get 15 minutes of sunlight (For vitamin D – helps fight depression)

Dr. Pride-Boone views the COVID-19 pandemic as analogous to a tsunami hitting each of us and we are all experiencing some degree of shock. Losing a loved one in addition to experiencing the pandemic places each of us in a position of health vulnerability. Everyone uses different strategies for dealing with each of their houses. Find what works for you to maintain your houses and maintain your total health.

Rev. Dr. Johnny Turner and Sis. Doris Bourgeois Turner acknowledge that "grief and loss are difficult during anytime but are extremely painful and almost incomprehensible during this pandemic." They also note that "COVID-19 has taken the lives of so many, bringing an abrupt emotional disruption to lives filled with hopes, dreams and aspirations." They provided four tips to help say "I love you" and "goodbye," and to reconcile the pain. Two are presented in this Update and two will appear in a later edition

1. **The completion letter** – The person grieving can write a letter (or several letters) to help say goodbye and share undelivered emotional communications that are making him or her feel incomplete and making it difficult to say goodbye. Look back over the relationship with the loved one (reflection). Make a list of any statements needing to be included – apologies, forgiveness, acknowledgements or other special emotional statements. Review the list and then write the letter(s).
2. **Approaches to grief and healing** – The person grieving does have to deal with pain and loss and should not attempt to resolve problems too quickly by implementing short-term solutions. If part of a specific religious tradition, seek spiritual support through those practices. Also, other professional help and guidance is available.

Rev. Chavers reminds the bereaved that although it may not feel like it, grieving is a temporary state. You will resume your activities of regular life, but the process of grieving takes time.

You can consider holding a memorial at a later time. In the meantime, stay connected to the Lord through prayer, and stay connected to others as we draw strength from those who care about us. Make the effort to call, send an email, write a note, videoconference or use whatever means works for you to remain connected to the people who support you.

Special Focus: How to Deal with Issues Regarding Almost Everything!

Although COVID-19 will probably be classified as one of the most devastating viruses of all time, living in the Capital Region of New York has some advantages in terms of supports from businesses, organizations and individuals. With the plethora of resources available to us, a few are highlighted here but more are available in this week's "Resources Available to You" document. Topics added to our resource document range from how to apply for unemployment to free wifi access; from accessing prepared and packaged meal solutions to providing coaching, job training and professional development to young professionals; from support regarding childcare to support for small businesses; and everything in between.

A new interest has also surfaced this week, and that is volunteering. People want use the time they now have to help others, and there are many websites that can assist one in finding the right match for his or her interest(s). Remember too that financial donations are also appreciated by most organizations working to provide support during the COVID-19 pandemic. There is no shortage of avenues to take if one desires to help or is looking for help or information about a specific area.

Three websites, in particular, worth checking out provide a wealth of information and support across a variety of areas:

- Coronavirus (COVID-19) Community Resources for the Albany NY Area – The City of Albany and New York State provide a website filled with information about local hospitals and medical centers, student meal plans, COVID-19 preventative measures, restaurants offering takeout and delivery, and more. <https://www.albany.com/community-support/>
- The 518 Responding to COVID-19 Together – This website allows you to volunteer to offer a specific service, such as running errands, completing odd jobs, cooking, or tutoring. In addition, it connects you with other resource organizations that provide food assistance, professional development, refugee support and more. <https://518mutual-aid.com/resources>
- The City School District of Albany – You may think the school district only offers support for academic instruction, but it offers much more. The website is updated frequently to provide the most current information regarding a variety of topics, such as the 2020 Census, childcare, free wifi opportunities, Chromebook availability and distribution, National Grid Assistance and health insurance. Check the website often. Go to <https://www.albanyschools.org/> Click the banner for "COVID-19 Updates and Information."

Basically, whatever you have an interest in or need for is only a few clicks away! What are you waiting for?

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, ***and to designate how you want your contribution allocated, i.e. tithes, benevolence, scholarship, etc.***
- 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. ***Each day one of the Trustees stop at church to secure any checks received 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 <https://www.cnn.com/2020/03/20/health/coronavirus-response-must-adapt-frieden-analysis/index.html>

ⁱⁱ *“How to Cope with Bereavement During the COVID-19 Pandemic,”* by Jason Spindel. Psychology Today, April 7, 2020. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/bravery-in-bereavement/202004/how-cope-bereavement-during-the-covid-19-pandemic>

ⁱⁱⁱ *On Death and Dying: What the Dying Have to Teach Doctors, Nurses, Clergy & Their Own Families*” by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, 1969.