

Dear San Gabriel Presbytery family,

We are moving into a new chapter of uncertainty as we figure out life under Gov. Gavin Newsom's "Stay Home" Executive Order. If you've missed it, he simply ordered, through the State Public Health Officer, for "**all individuals living in the State of California to stay home or at their place of residence**" except for functions that are "critical in order to protect the health and well-being of all Californians." This order is broad and without a set end date, though just before this, an order came out for Los Angeles County that set an initial end date of April 19th.

In short, this means that while you may get groceries and gas and other essentials for life, you are otherwise expected to stay at home. And it's not just a Bay Area problem; the second person in LA County just died—someone in their 30s with underlying health conditions, who lived just outside of Pasadena.

This order to stay home is one way to direct our efforts to care for each other. Since the statistics show that 80% of people with Coronavirus got it from people who didn't even know they had it, then our actions should be guided as follows: **Act as if you are carrying the virus.**

This is a surreal time. History books will write about us, about how we manage this, and how we found new ways to love God and love each other. I have been amazed at the creativity of so many of our pastors and church leaders as they find ways to invite us to worship and to stay connected in this time of physical separation. And I can point to certain proof that God watches out for us, as our newest staff member, Rev. Ally Lee, has been masterful in providing resources and communications for us in this confusing time. You can go to www.sangabpres.org any time as she posts the latest resources on virtual worship, online meetings, and online giving as well as government and denominational updates.

There's a lot of data, and it's changing every half-hour, so let me be very simple and blunt in my suggestions, following Micah 6:8:

1. Do justice: Commit to all your staff, and continue their pay regardless of changes in workload. Let me know at wendytajima@sangabpres.org if your church cannot sustain your payroll. I am collecting data and working with the Synod and Presbytery Executive Commission to find ways to help our churches weather this storm.
2. Love kindness: Find ways to connect: send an email, make a phone call, send a card or letter to some one or several members of your church and community. And pray for and seek ways to reach out to those who are most impacted by this crisis.
3. Walk humbly with our God: Take this time to slow down and trust God and join in one of many virtual worship services. Ally has compiled a directory of virtual worship services of churches in our presbytery, so if your church does not have organized worship this Sunday, consider visiting a sister church's worship service.

As we live into this wilderness, we know there is nothing that we can rely on but our Lord Jesus, who is with us now and forever. In these times of physical separation, we are grateful for knowing that in the Holy Spirit we are connected always. And when we feel isolated, may we take a moment and listen for that still, small voice that says

Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are mine.
When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,
and the flame shall not consume you. (*Isaiah 43:1b-2*)

God is with us, filling every corner of our homes, keeping us strong in body and mind, loving us more than we can understand. And we will stay connected, through our Monday Morning Update, through our Tuesday 10 am Zoom meeting of church leaders, and whenever you want to ask a question, share an idea, voice a concern, give a little boost, pray a little prayer. We are here, and we are together.

In Christ's peace,
Wendy