**3-Week Church Campus Closure and An Update from Pastor Kenny Regarding the Coronavirus**

*COVID-19 Planning and Updates*

(Canton, Ga, March 13, 2020)

Canton First UMC Family,

Due to the increasing number of COVID-19 cases in our state, the Office of the Bishop of The North Georgia Conference has asked all United Methodist Churches to suspend worship and large gatherings until the end of the month. This is in line with recent government decisions to close schools and cancel other public gatherings and will hopefully “flatten the curve” of the pandemic. The safety and well-being of our congregants is important to us and we will continue monitoring the developing circumstances regarding the coronavirus.

In light of these circumstances and recommendations, the church campus and preschool will be closed to onsite church ministry for the next three weeks. All bible studies, Wednesday night activities, small groups, and meetings are suspended. Even though we will not be together physically, we want to remain connected spiritually for worship, prayer and devotion during the Lenten season. Therefore, we will have online worship services through Facebook Live at 10:30 a.m. on Sunday, March 15, 22, and 29. We are also exploring ways to conduct virtual bible study and sermon discussions. Please check back often via social media, our website, and watch for e-mails for further updates regarding the campus closing.

And remember this: Even though the campus is closed, the ministry of the church continues! Now is the time that we can truly be the hands and feet of Christ for our neighbors. Now is the time that we, the followers of Christ, can share the peace that passes all understanding. Now is the time you and I can be a non-anxious presence in the hysteria. In the words of the Apostle Paul, *Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.* (Philippians 4.4-7)

**What can you do?**

* Join together in worship via livestream at 10:30 a.m. on Facebook Live on March 15, 22 and 29! Look for a link on our website – cantonumc.org.
* Check in on your neighbors, coworkers, classmates, friends and family.
* Call the church office or email susan.brown@cantonumc.org to volunteer to help care for others.
* Practice everyday prevention measures like washing your hands for at least 20 seconds. We could all use more time to pray, so why not take this time to pray for your neighbor, someone in need, or those affected by the virus. Did you know that the Lord’s Prayer is 20 seconds long?
* Cover coughs and sneezes and if you are sick, stay home.
* Take steps to protect yourself by following the guidance of our public health organizations and the Center for Disease Control (CDC). For more information visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.

**What are we doing?**

* Church custodians are using products confirmed to kill viruses and are focused on ensuring our buildings are clean and well stocked with soap and paper towels, as well as sanitizing high touch areas (hard surfaces, door handles, tables, countertops, and restrooms).
* We have made hand sanitizer solutions available in each of the restrooms and throughout the building for you to use as you enter and leave our facilities.
* Our preschool staff is following the Cherokee County School District and cancelling all classes until March 27. Additional measures have been taken to make sure all hard surfaces and toys are disinfected.
* Our staff are following all prevention measures including washing their hands frequently and staying home if they are sick.

**Important Notes:**

* The staff will continue normal business hours from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. to be available to support the needs of our congregants. Please call the office at (770) 479-2502 if we can help you in any way.
* Please limit entry and exit of the church facilities to the doors at the Fellowship Hall.

**Ways to Stay Connected**

* For the next three weeks, worship with us virtually on Facebook Live on Sunday mornings at 10:30 a.m. Our staff will be interacting with our virtual congregants during the service! You will have an opportunity to ask questions, send prayer requests, give online, and interact with our ministry team.
* Check our website and Facebook page for frequent updates and resources regarding ways to stay involved.
* We will provide more information on our Facebook regarding virtual resources that may become available for ministry groups.
* Continue supporting the ministry of your church financially. You can give online by following the direct link here: <https://giving.ncsservices.org/App/Giving/cantonumc>. We will make this link available during our virtual Sunday Worship service as well.
* Your giving is important. It allows us to continue to support our partners in ministry, including MUST Ministries, Community Food Delivery (Door-to-Door), Goshen Valley Boys Ranch, Cherokee County School Prayer and Mentor Groups, and others, including those that will be directly affected by school closings and other events related to the coronavirus.

For more information or if you have additional questions, please call the Church Office at (770) 479-2502, or email canton.first@cantonumc.org.

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