



UNITED METHODISTS OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

Take this in remembrance of me.
Jesus

Dear Clergy Colleagues,

These are unprecedented times and new and evolving learnings for all of us. The cabinet and I celebrated on Monday the amazing ministry being done by our clergy who are serving in congregations, extension ministries and in retirement. You have made us proud to serve alongside of you. Thank you for all you are doing in this challenging time.

We also came to grips that the best guidance from the medical and science world have determined that the virus will peak in May or June and will continue until August or September. They are using models that show between 80,000 to 200,000 people will die in the U.S. due to Covid-19. If New Jersey were a nation, we would be ranked 9th in the world and our neighbor New York would be ranked 6th in the world in terms of the number of Covid-19 cases. We must be prepared for our present congregational and personal life experiences of physical and social distancing to continue or even worsen through the summer. This reality is a deep disappointment.

Tomorrow, the superintendents will be sharing this information with you and congregational leadership. We wanted you to be aware in advance so that you may be ready to respond to questions and concerns. I believe it is best to provide clarity on the present reality and to help people live through it. God is and will see us through this time.

These are unprecedented times and call for spiritual practices that comfort God's people and draw them closer to God and one another. I have found the sacrament of Holy Communion to be a powerful spiritual experience that has drawn me closer to God and to fellow believers. The cabinet and I agree that while we prefer the celebrant and the gathered to be in the same place, that God transcends distance and time; that God in our own imperfections, in our disruptive experiences - heals, perfects and liberates what we cannot comprehend.

Therefore, I will be celebrating Holy Communion online with all clergy and after you participate in online Holy Communion with me, I grant the authority of each clergy person to administer the

sacrament online. I will celebrate with you, our clergy, leading the liturgy of Holy Communion and providing the guidelines for online Communion. In this service, together, we will consecrate the elements and receive the sacrament. I will also answer questions you may have.

I would like all of us to share in the sacrament at 11:00 a.m., this Thursday, April 2. I would like for you to join the cabinet and me, even if you do not plan to lead Holy Communion online. I hope you can clear your schedule for this time of worship and celebration. This will be an opportunity for all of us to connect and worship together. If you for any reason cannot participate on April 2, a second service will be held on Friday, April 3 at 9:00 a.m. Family members in your household are also welcome to share in this worship service with you.

The information for participating through Zoom is:

Thursday, April 2, 11:00 a.m.

[Join Zoom Meeting](https://zoom.us/j/606388737) | <https://zoom.us/j/606388737> | Meeting ID: 606 388 737

Or you may phone using this number: (646) 876-9923 | Meeting ID: 606 388 737

Friday, April 3, 9:00 a.m.

[Join Zoom Meeting](https://zoom.us/j/869964947) | <https://zoom.us/j/869964947> | Meeting ID: 869 964 947

Or you may phone using this number (646) 876-9923 | Meeting ID: 869 964 947

[You may learn how to use Zoom here.](#)

When you gather for worship and the sacrament, I invite you to prepare some bread and juice or water. Place them on a plate and cover them in preparation for this holy ministry.

This will be hard for me. I believe the sacraments call us to be present in body and spirit. These are unprecedented times and people need to be spiritually fed. These are also times in which God is ready to make all things new, including me, you, the church and our ministries. It is a new time in which we all seek to be faithful and spiritually nourish one another.

I hope you will join me in connecting with God and one another through the Holy Spirit.

Keep the faith!

John

John Schol, Bishop
United Methodists of Greater New Jersey

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