

THE COVENANTER
March 22, 2020

Member NE GEORGIA Presbytery, Synod
of the South Atlantic, General
Assembly of the Presbyterian Church
(U S A)

In John's gospel, there's a story about Jesus healing a man in Jerusalem who had been sick for 38 years (John 5:1-9). The man was one of many who gathered near a traditional healing pool near the Sheep Gate. The problem was, he had no one to help him get into the pool; a whole new life was literally just out of reach – which makes this sound like a very contemporary story about so many in our own country who still don't have access to health care.

What's interesting is that when Jesus sees the man, he doesn't immediately lift him up and place him in the water. Instead, he asks, "Do you want to be made well?" Which, I think, is more than just an obvious question with an obvious answer. What Jesus is doing is honoring this man's agency, respecting his sense of what he needs. As one of my teachers often said, the most caring response any of us can make when faced with a crisis is not, "Let me fix this," but "How can I help?"

Over the past week as we have started learning how to navigate the coronavirus crisis, so many of you have called or emailed or texted and asked, "How can I help?" You've offered everything from hand sanitizer to information about local response efforts to your own presence and time serving our neighbors through the food pantry. You have texted with simple words of encouragement. You are praying and trusting in God's goodness and mercy. You are reminding me how we are called to stand together until we can all step once again into the healing waters and come out into a new day. Thank you! We love you! Jesus loves you the best. Keep letting us know about members and friends who may have unspoken needs. After all, one of the remarkable gifts of spending less time involved in our usual work and busyness is that we have more time for one another. Thanks be to God! *Mark*

You can view worship services on You Tube at this address:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCCkRp1t3MnecoYXnds4X03A> .

Prayer Concerns: Dot Handley, Covenants office volunteer, at Piedmont; Coffee Worth in hospital in Lakeland, FL with Peritonitis. If you would like to send her a card her address is 1323 Timberidge Drive, Lakeland, FL 33809; Dan Whitney recovering well from knee surgery 3/19; for those who are affected by the COVID-19 illness, as well as their caregivers, our healthcare professionals, government leaders and those who are working around the clock to minimize the impact of this virus; Heide Wiegel at home recovering well from back surgery; Shirley Reinert recovering from a car accident; Mike Swanson preparing for cancer treatment; Paula Zimdars ongoing merkel cell carcinoma treatment; Anne Page at Avery Place #145; Ruth Brewster at Arbor Terrace #222; Pauline Marshall at Highland Hills #112; John & Elizabeth Brewer, & Anna Holshouser at home.

COVENANT
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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DAILY BIBLE READINGS – March 23 – 29

Monday	I Samuel 16: 1-13
Tuesday	Ephesians 5: 8-14
Wednesday	John 1: 1-14
Thursday	John 3: 19-24
Friday	John 9: 1-17
Saturday	John 9: 18-34
Sunday	John 9: 35-41

If you think you have the
coronavirus you
can
contact Piedmont Hospital
at 1-800-460-1119.

PANDEMIC

What if you thought of it
as the Jews consider the Sabbath—
the most sacred of times?

Cease from travel.
Cease from buying and selling.
Give up, just for now,
on trying to make the world
different than it is.
Sing. Pray. Touch only those
to whom you commit your life.
Center down.

And when your body has become still,
reach out with your heart.
Know that we are connected
in ways that are terrifying and beautiful.
(You could hardly deny it now.)
Know that our lives
are in one another's hands.
(Surely, that has come clear.)
Do not reach out your hands.
Reach out your heart.
Reach out your words.
Reach out all the tendrils
of compassion that move, invisibly,
where we cannot touch.

Promise this world your love--
for better or for worse,
in sickness and in health,
so long as we all shall live.

--Lynn Ungar 3/11/20

Lynn Ungar is a poet and blogger from California, who is also a minister for an online network of Unitarian Universalists. She publishes daily <http://www.dailycompass.org/>

HOW TO GIVE—

In order to honor one another's health and safety, and to practice social distancing (we're learning a whole new vocabulary, right?), Covenant encourages you to either send your offerings through the mail, OR to access our online giving option on our website. Click on the financial contributions link on our website, or this link <http://covpresathens.org/wp/financial-contributions/> and you will be directed to our donations button. Our deepest thanks for your ongoing support and pledges towards our new year of ministry during our current stewardship campaign.

From United Way of Northeast Georgia—Partner Agencies Services & Needs COVID-19

We know that right now is a trying and scary time. Our local area nonprofits are continuing to provide incredible resources and services to our neighbors in need. Here are a few updates:

[ACTION, Inc.](#) has implemented an online application process to continue to serve its communities. ACTION, Inc. has very limited funding available for emergency assistance for rent and utility assistance in its various counties, so financial support is welcome.

[American Red Cross](#) is [in need of blood donations from healthy individuals](#), as they have a severe blood shortage due to an unprecedented number of blood drive cancellations in response to the coronavirus outbreak. Individuals can schedule an appointment to give blood with the Red Cross by visiting [RedCrossBlood.org](#), using the [Red Cross Blood Donor App](#), calling 1-800-RED-CROSS.

[Athens Community Council on Aging](#) is continuing and expanding their Meals on Wheels program and are now offering commodity deliveries. They are in need of financial support, toilet paper and cleaning supplies. Additionally if you are home with your kids and need an activity, a great one is to write notes of encouragement or create a piece of art for the seniors who are home bound. These letters can be delivered to ACCA during normal business hours.

[Athens Neighborhood Health Center](#) is still open and receiving patients.

[Boys and Girls Club of Athens](#) is closed but are working on creating virtual activities for its kids next week.

[Family Counseling Service](#) is still meeting with current patients via TeleDoc but are not accepting new patients at this time. Their office is closed for the next two weeks and will reassess after that time.

[Food Bank of Northeast Georgia](#) is ramping up their food distribution in coordination with their partners to meet demands, and are continuing their Food 2 Kids weekend feeding program. At the moment, they need financial contributions and food donations (donations can be dropped off at 861 Newton Bridge Road, Athens, Ga. and 46 Plaza Way in Clayton, Ga). Additionally, they are looking for a temporary worker for the next few weeks in the Athens warehouse. High school seniors (17 years and up) or college students who can do physical labor in the warehouse are encouraged to email sherry@foodbanknega.org.

[Harmony House](#) is continuing to provide all emergency Forensic Interviews and Sexual Assault Examinations. Both offices will have limited staff on site during business hours for crisis calls and the 24-hour crisis line will be remotely staffed after normal hours. Trauma Focused Therapy is being provided using a Telemental Health platform.

[Madison-Morgan County Caring Place](#) is continuing food distribution as normal, but Individuals receiving distributions will pick up their own boxes.

[Oglethorpe County Senior Center](#) is providing To-Go lunches at 11:30 to their seniors that can drive and they will deliver hot meals to those folks for whom they normally provide transportation. They are continuing Home Delivery Meal service and dialysis appointments. Unfortunately, the center itself will be closed to non-essential services and will reopen on March 31.

[Project Safe](#) is still accepting new clients and its hotline is fully operational. They are limiting community group meetings but are offering virtual meetings for current group members. For those in domestic violence situations, Project Safe is still an available resource.

[Salvation Army](#) is still taking in clients with quarantine protocols in place. The dining hall is for open for residents only but grab-and-go is available outside the dining hall. They are requesting any donations of cleaning supplies.

[The Cottage](#) is still operating its 24/7 Crisis Hotline to serve community members. They are working on providing virtual support groups and tele-mental health services hopefully becoming available in the next two weeks.

As the Coronavirus continues to spread, so do fear and misinformation. Here are some simple actions that will help reduce your risk, and also reduce the risk of others.

1. **Wash your hands.** It may seem boring and “old news,” but it works. Wash with clean running water and lather with soap; don’t forget the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and also your nails. Scrub for at least 20 seconds – this is about the amount of time it takes to sing the Doxology. (How good it is to remember to praise God, even in the midst of this crisis!) If you use alcohol-based hand sanitizers, the gel must contain at least 60% alcohol, and this should also be done for about 20 seconds.
2. **Stock up.** Make sure you have at least a 30-day supply of prescriptions, as well as over-the-counter medicines for flu, food staples, and laundry detergent. For families with young children, buy sufficient diapers. You may also want to purchase bottled water.
3. **Develop a plan.** Planning prevents panic. Create an emergency checklist and action plan, and share with all family members. Be in contact with schools regarding their contingency plans, and think ahead about dealing with early dismissals or closures. Prepare for caring for elderly family members or those with special health concerns.
4. **Use common sense.** Get a flu shot; avoid people who are coughing and sneezing; don’t make hospital visits unless absolutely necessary. Please note that health experts say face masks are fairly useless in preventing infection. If, however, someone has contracted the virus, then they should wear one to prevent spreading the illness. Get plenty of rest, eat healthily, and maintain a good exercise regimen.
5. **Keep calm and trust God.** Stress and anxiety can compromise your immune system. Don’t fixate on the news; instead, feed your soul with God’s word. In Psalm 46 we read: *“God is our refuge and strength; a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear...Be still, and know that I am God.”* Remember, too, that we are always called to serve others who are hurting and fearful; be open to situations where God can use you to be a calm and helpful presence in the lives of others. Let the love of Jesus be shared through us wherever it is most needed.

For more information, please visit the website of the Centers for Disease Control: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/

Blessings,

Rev. Ed Rees
Chair, Disaster Preparedness Team PC (USA)