

March 30, 2020



DEAR FRIENDS,

This Bible verse has been rattling around in my head over the weekend:

I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong— that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith. (Romans 1:11-12)

Though it is the calling of our pastors to lead us spiritually, what I know is that we are also encouraged and spurred on by you. We miss you, and we are eager to be back together as soon as it is wise and permissible to gather.

Still, since we are living *Together Apart* in this manner right now, there are many things we want to convey to you. Read on to discover what is happening with worship, local ministry, church operations and more.



Worship: It is important that we continue to come before the Lord and worship. We will re-gather in our worship spaces as soon as it is allowable, but for now we are making plans to **worship virtually through Holy Week and beyond**. On Palm Sunday, April 5, we look forward to celebrating Communion together from our homes. We'll send details about all of our upcoming Holy Week services.

Last Sunday was the first Sunday we tried streaming our services. For the sake of social distancing, and to minimize the number of people necessary behind cameras, we will continue to pre-record our services. They will be available early Sunday morning at fpcboulder.org/messages or you can join us live at 10am.

Ministry: We are eager for our church to not simply pause during this season (though certainly take the opportunity to pause often), we also want help our faith grow and deepen, which is always accompanied by good deeds (see James 2:14-26). *We are For Boulder With Love.*

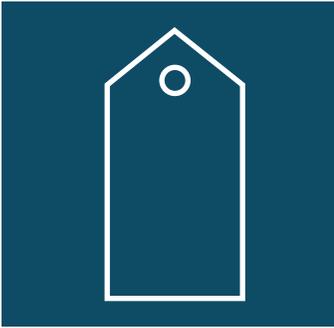
We encourage you to begin thinking of your personal walk with the Lord in terms of three expanding circles: **Home, Neighbor, and Community**. Allow your household to be an oasis of God's Spirit, love your neighbor, reach out to the community. On our website and through our daily emails to you, you will begin to see an expanded list of opportunities to live in Christ, even with social distancing in place.

As an opening opportunity at **Home**, join one of the pastors for a book group by Zoom. Or, join an online prayer group with the Prayer Ministry. Details are at fpcboulder.org and will be coming by email throughout the week.

Grace Commons Church: We are saddened that we won't get to gather for an Easter Celebration, or introduce our new name to the whole community on that day. So, here is our plan going forward to launch our new name:

We will have a more internal 'soft-launch' of Grace Commons beginning July 1. This will allow publications, our website, Fall registrations, etc. to be prepared for the 2020-21 ministry year. Then, we will have a big celebration and public roll-out during our Worship at the Rez service on August 16. Please mark it on your calendars.





For Boulder With Love: What an amazing time to declare that we are *For Boulder With Love!*—and what a challenging time to be leading a capital campaign. We are overwhelmed with gratitude that we have received over \$7.8M in commitments. Despite canceling Commitment Sunday, and with all the open questions about our economy, pledges are still coming in. Wow.

However, in a time of such extraordinary disruption let me assure you that the most important thing to us is your spiritual welfare and getting through this together. Our vision will move forward, but we will come back at a later date to finish the campaign with a rescheduled Commitment Sunday, a revised timeline for giving and any recalibration to your pledges necessary.



Stewardship and Giving: We are all experiencing unprecedented disruption to our usual way of life, including First Pres and other not-for-profit agencies. Many of our sister churches have had close to a 50% decline in giving over the past three weeks.

Thankfully, our giving pattern is not yet that dramatic, so let me encourage you to continue giving as you are able. If you have not yet arranged for online or automated giving to the church let me encourage you to go to fpcboulder.org/give.



Operations and Budget: In the meantime, let me share with you some steps our elders, trustees and personnel committee are taking, and considering taking in the weeks to come. Because of the building closure and program furlough, we know we will see some lower expenses in this last quarter of our fiscal year. However, personnel costs are the largest portion of our budget (65%), and we have not yet made any changes in this area. We are studying ways to be good stewards of your gifts and the overall fiscal health of the church, including likely changes to pastoral and staff compensation.

We love our staff and care for them, and we also need to tend to the stewardship and health of the whole church. It may be that the recently passed CARES Act will help us flex some personnel costs month to month until we come through the other side of this pandemic. We are studying, and we will communicate all we can, as soon as we can, about how we are proceeding.



Pastor's Coffee: Finally, I will be hosting a virtual Pastor's Coffee on Thursday, April 2 at 7pm and then again on Friday, April 3 at noon. Instructions on how to attend and participate are coming soon. I hope you can set time aside to join us.

Again, my friends, there is always more to share than space allows. Know that our prayers have been with you and for you as we seek to live in Christ together, apart.

Peace,

Erik