

THE PORTLIGHT

A newsletter for members and friends of Portland Avenue United Methodist Church

Elijah

*Elijah drew this picture April 25
and said, "I remembered the church
had colorful glass windows."*



May 2020

Our Mission

"To grow followers of
Jesus who change the
world."

Our Vision

"To be a safe harbor
along life's journey."

The **PORT**
A safe harbor along life's journey.

Note from Pastor Carol: The following article contains useful information not only for The PORT's Leaders, but for all of us as we attempt to balance our heart's desire to return to worship with the realities and practicalities of doing so.

As the article states, our Dakotas-Minnesota Area Bishop Bruce Ough has extended the suspension of in-person worship for all our United Methodist congregations through at least May 30, while asking that we spend this time carefully and prayerfully developing a plan for how to return to in-person worship in a gradual manner.

As your Church Council and I make an effort to devise a plan for our congregation, we ask for your prayers, support, and understanding, as a gradual return to in-person worship as we knew it may take well beyond May 30 to phase in. Please read the following article to get a sense of all the factors to be considered.

* * *



Christa Meland

When are we going to be able to worship together again? That's a question weighing heavily on the minds of both clergy and church members—and unfortunately, there's no simple answer. Given the current state and federal health agency recommendations, the number of cases of COVID-19, and the severity of the illness for a portion

of the population, it's clear we're not going to be able to simply resume the types of gatherings we had in February.

The question we need to shift our attention to asking isn't about when to re-open our churches and resume gathering but *how* to do it. In order to keep people healthy and safe, recovering from the pandemic is going to need to be a marathon, not a sprint. In other words, returning to church will need to happen in phases. The Minnesota Department of Health has said that restrictions will be lifted gradually, so initially, after Governor Tim Walz's "Stay at Home" executive order is lifted, it's likely to be small groups of 10 or fewer that will be able to safely gather. Over time, that number will likely increase in the reverse of how it decreased—so 10 perhaps becomes 50, then 100, then 250, as the situation in Minnesota improves.

"As I have said before, I believe those of us in the faith community should be the first responders when it comes to the spiritual, physical, and mental health of

all of God's people," said Bishop Bruce R. Ough. "Therefore, **I am asking every Minnesota congregation to continue to suspend in-person worship through May 30 and to spend that time carefully and prayerfully developing a plan for how to return to in-person worship in a gradual manner** while continuing to strictly adhere to federal and state recommendations. As we continue to navigate this challenging season, let us remember that God is with us."

Creating a plan for your church:

Although it is imperative that we continue to take our cues from the Governor's Office, the Minnesota Department of Health, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, spend the month of May working with your leadership team to consider how you might safely offer small group, in-person worship experiences as state guidelines allow it. Consider the following questions as you create a written plan:

- **How will you continue to offer online worship and small group experiences for those who are not able or do not feel comfortable meeting in-person?** It is clear that we will not soon be able to return to the size and scope of in-person gatherings we led earlier this year. At the same time, it has become evident that a tremendous amount of creativity and innovation has been unleashed in this season of quarantine, which has enabled us to connect with new people in new ways. In order to continue to minister to all current members and reach new people, how can our new normal blend both virtual and in-person experiences? We encourage you to begin your plan by considering how to offer virtual worship and small groups on an ongoing basis.
- **What would it look like to offer multiple small group, in-person worship experiences rather than one or two large gatherings?** Where could smaller gatherings be held and how will you ensure social distancing of at least six feet between each family unit? Who could help lead smaller gatherings? If you have a large church, it might not be feasible for your pastor(s) to lead each one. What times could these gatherings be offered to enable broad participation? If you're meeting in the sanctuary, consider having one family unit per pew and cordoning off every other pew to allow for proper distancing. If you have a smaller sanctuary, consider meeting outdoors.

(continued on page 6)

A Note to Sunday School Students

We're sorry to say that Sunday School will not be back in session in-person this year. Your Sunday School teachers miss you and hope you are still learning by studying the materials mailed to you last month.

Youth Group News (Watch email for Google Hangouts Meet Details)

May 3 - 11:00 am to 12:00 pm Confirmation via Google Hangouts Meet.

May 3 - 6:00 pm Youth Group check-in via Google Hangouts Meet.

May 9 - Plant Sale Delivery and Distribution. Contact Judy Richardson-Mahre for information on helping with the delivery at 11:00 am. Limited number of helpers are needed. Plant pick-up times are from 12-12:30 pm.

May 17 - 6:00 pm Youth Group check-in via Google Hangouts Meet.

Congregational News Related to COVID-19

In-Person Activities Remain Suspended

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have suspended all in-person activities, including Sunday School, Coffee Fellowship, and Worship on Sunday mornings, as of March 13.

We continue to monitor information provided at the national, state and local levels. At this point, our Dakotas-Minnesota Area Bishop Bruce Ough has extended the suspension of in-person worship for all our United Methodist congregations through at least May 30, while asking that we spend this time carefully and prayerfully developing a plan for how to return to in-person worship in a gradual manner (see article on pp. 2, 6 & 7).

Updates regarding the suspension of our activities and communication about when we will resume in-person activities again will be shared via Congregational Letter distributed by mail and email while being cross-posted to our website (<http://www.paumc.org/>) and our Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/PortlandAvenueUMC/>). Please be watching for news from church and take the time to read it so that you will be well-informed.

Spirit Lake Mission Trip Canceled

Our Youth Group expressed interest in participating in an intergenerational mission trip this August to Spirit Lake Reservation in North Dakota. Sadly, this mission trip was canceled because of the risks associated with travel during this pandemic. While this is a big disappointment, we anticipate its return in 2021, so will consider going then.

Online Worship

Since Sunday, April 4, we have uploaded worship videos each week to our new YouTube Channel at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8VTgOhg7PNDgwjLArbXnIA>.



In the weeks following, we learned how to schedule our worship video as a Premiere airing at 10:00 AM on both YouTube and Facebook, enabling you to watch on the platform of your choice.



Here is the address to our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/PortlandAvenueUMC/>.

We have also been mailing a print version of worship, including a prayer, scripture reading, brief message, prayer requests, and words to hymns to those without email addresses. If we've somehow missed mailing this to you and you'd like one, please contact Kathryn in the church office at (952) 888-6070 to be added to the distribution list.

Financial Update

Our building and staff-related expenses have continued despite the disruptions to our in-person ministries. Our Finance Team encourages us to make contributions as normally as each of us can so that we can remain current on our obligations and emerge with strength for the remainder of the year. Please mail to 8000 Portland Ave S, Bloomington, MN 55420. Year to Date Giving Statements will be sent out soon by email (with some by mail) to help us all see how we're tracking so far for the year. Thank you for your ongoing support of The PORT's ministries.

Operation Sunshine

Lori Livingston had a wonderful idea a few weeks ago. "As these weeks pass and our church sits dark and empty, I was thinking this would be a wonderful time to remind our neighbors why we are a safe harbor along life's journey," she said. And so, the idea of "Operation Sunshine" was born in order to "visibly show our support and gratitude to the essential workers and first responders, and for our neighbors who just need some sunshine in these difficult days."

Lori sent the idea to a few other leaders at The PORT, and it received great enthusiasm. She and her sister Lynn set the date of April 18 for drop-off, and then sent out an invitation for members and friends to create an 18" x 24" poster/sign that could be mounted on our Holiday Bazaar sign frames and displayed in our yard on the Portland Avenue side of the building. "Let's wrap our church yard in colorful home-made signs with expressions of thanks and happiness," they said.



People of The PORT really came through! Many bright, beautiful, encouraging signs were designed for this project. They were covered in plastic and then set out in the lawn. "This is our chance to make a difference in a small but very visible way," Lori said. She even contacted the City of Bloomington, and they waived their standard sign policy for this project, as they were looking forward to seeing "Operation Sunshine" brightening up our corner of Bloomington!

Thank you to Lori and Lynn, and all who so creatively made signs for this wonderful project. We've already heard from residents and essential workers who have been touched by this display of kindness and appreciation.



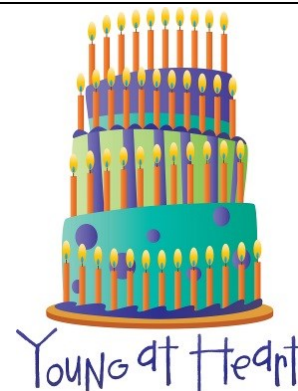


Congregational Care

We celebrate YOU during MAY

If you have a birthday during the month of May but your name isn't on our list, PLEASE LET US KNOW, so we can update our records for next year.

03 - Bob Deese	14 - Laura Avery	23 - Evelyn Runck
05 - Tom Wellman	- Chuck Bartels	24 - Scott Swenson
06 - Amy Runck	16 - Mike Moreland	- Shiloh Wilson
10 - Janene Haugen	18 - Rylie Rasmussen	25 - Jim Louisiana
12 - Zoe Peine	19 - Nathan Wells	28 - Sharon Beckler
		29 - Amelia Swenson



Guest Column *(continued from page 2)*

- **How will you make the gradual transition to larger in-person gatherings?** We urge you to expand the number of people gathered in accordance with Minnesota Department of Health guidelines, and increase the number gradually. Even when it's safe for small groups to gather, encourage those over 60 and with underlying health conditions to continue to connect virtually until health agencies indicate it is safe for them to participate in-person.
- **How will you thoroughly clean and disinfect surfaces between each gathering?** Be sure to sanitize every surface in common areas before and after each group meets.
- **How will you handle greetings and passing the peace without person-to-person contact?** Use no-touch alternatives like a friendly wave, a slight bow of the head, or crossing your arms over your heart.
- **How you will collect the offering without person-to-person contact?** Consider having one or more baskets around the sanctuary that people could simply place their offering into during worship.
- **How can you minimize the number of items that need to be touched or distributed, and ensure anything that requires a direct touch point is done in a safe manner?** Consider using screens or bulletins (one-time use only) rather than Bibles, hymnals, or other worship books to avoid having multiple people touch surfaces that could carry the virus.
- **How will you offer communion in a safe manner?** Consider alternatives to in-person communion—like offering it online only given that touching



or removing face masks contaminates them. If you do in-person communion, have each person pick up a set of pre-packaged elements as they enter and remain socially distanced in their seats as they take communion.



- **How could you provide music safely?** As difficult as this is to think about, consider not singing when gathered. Singing has been known to spread droplets/aerosols that carry the virus a substantial distance and keep them suspended in the air, and a cloth mask is unlikely to be adequate protection. Instead, consider playing pre-recorded music and asking those gathered simply to listen or to hum along.
- **How will you handle fellowship time?** Consider creating opportunities for fellowship time online instead of before or after worship. For everyone's safety, think about encouraging people to leave the building as soon as worship concludes.
- **Which additional precautions will you take?** Consider having each person wear a cloth face mask in accordance with health agency recommendations for those gathered in public spaces. Your church could make and offer these to those who don't have one. Verbally and with signs posted on entries, tell people what the symptoms of coronavirus are—and advise those who aren't feeling well or are exhibiting any symptoms to stay home. Also consider eliminating or limiting volunteer-based nursery care when you first begin in-person gatherings given that social distancing guidelines likely couldn't be followed in a nursery with young children.



- **How will you direct the flow of traffic in your church to ensure everyone's safety?** Consider having people come in through one entrance and exit through a different entrance, one family unit at a time, so as to avoid unintentionally disrupting social distancing guidelines—and think about propping open the entry and exit doors to eliminate the need for people to touch door handles.

If you have questions about how to develop an adequate plan for your church and your context, feel free to contact your district superintendent for guidance.

Other recommendations

We offer considerations for other ways you can keep your congregation safe now and as we head into the summer:

- **Funerals:** If a family decides to have a funeral service immediately, limit attendees to the same number gathering for worship at that time; encourage families to have funeral services outdoors so people can more easily adhere to social distancing guidelines. Live stream funerals whenever possible to allow greater participation.
- **Vacation Bible School:** We strongly advise against having in-person Vacation Bible School (VBS) as children can be asymptomatic carriers of the virus. Instead of VBS, consider offering a virtual gathering for children that includes some type of lesson and activity and/or providing backyard VBS kits for families to use at home.



- **Mission trips:** We strongly recommend against offering mission trips this summer as travel will be risky for some time. Rather than going on a mission trip, partner with your local food shelf or emergency shelter, and help it meet vital needs.

Helpful resources

In addition to closely examining state and federal health agency recommendations, we consulted a variety of other resources in developing the above set of recommendations, including:

- [Guidelines for Faith-Based Communities](#), Minnesota Department of Health
- [Returning to Church](#), Wisconsin Council of Churches
- [Guidelines for Opening Up America Again](#), The White House
- [Guidance for the New Normal](#), Rick Kirchoff, Clergy Coaching Network
- [24 Questions Your Church Should Answer Before People Return](#), Ken Braddy Jr
- [Avoid This Big Mistake: Stepping Back Into the Past When You Step Back Into Your Building](#), Carey Nieuwhof
- [Church in These VUCA Times](#), Jake Morrill
- [Finding Our New Normal](#), Susan Beaumont, Congregational Consulting Group
- [Leaders, It's Time to Ask Critical Questions About Post-COVID-19 Church](#), John Thornburg, United Methodist Insight
- [Distributed Church](#), Fresh Expressions

Trustees

Thank You

Several anonymous gardeners have been busy around the grounds of our property lately. A big thank you for your care of the landscaping on the west side of the building, clearing out volunteer trees growing around the utility box on the southeast corner of the building, and picking up all the leaves left over from the fall and winter. We're looking great for our neighborhood!



Clearing this area is no small feat!

Portland Avenue United Methodist Church
8000 Portland Ave S, Bloomington, MN 55420



GIVE+
Electronic Giving Options



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

DATED MATERIAL
PLEASE EXPEDITE

Join us for worship online Sundays at 10:00 am. We're on YouTube and Facebook.
Sunday School (9:00 am) and Coffee Fellowship (9:30 am) suspended until further notice.

Staff

Rev. Carol Zaagsma (Pastor) carol.zaagsma@paumc.org (cell phone for emergencies 651-329-7878)

Kathryn Quam (Administrative Assistant) paumc@paumc.org

Open Position (Youth Director)

Peggy Larson (Music Director) peggylarson@comcast.net

Dale Miller (Accompanist) miller.daler@gmail.com

Judy Richardson-Mahre (SonRise Singers Director) jembrm@charter.net

Mary Nelson (Handbells Director) nelsonc2m@aol.com

Paul Herrmann (Custodian) 612-916-3376

Church Office E-mail: PAUMC@paumc.org PAUMC Website: www.paumc.org

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/PortlandAvenueUMC/>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8VTgOhg7PNDgwjLArbXn1A>



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		TUNE IN FOR SUNDAY WORSHIP ONLINE @ 10:00 AM: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8VTgOhg7PNDgwjLArbXnIA • https://www.facebook.com/PortlandAvenueUMC/ 			1	2
3 10:00am Online Worship 11:00am Confirmation Videoconference 6:00pm Youth Group Videoconference	4	5	6	7	8	9 12:00-12:30 pm Plant Sale Fundraiser Pickup @ Church
10 MOTHER'S DAY 10:00am Online Worship 11:15am Mission Outreach Videoconference	11	12 6:00pm Trustees Videoconference	13	14	15 Newsletter Deadline	16
17 10:00am Online Worship 6:00pm Youth Group Videoconference	18	19	20	21	22	23
24 10:00am Online Worship	25 MEMORIAL DAY	26	27	28	29	30
31 PENTECOST 10:00am Online Worship						