



Ken Mawr United Presbyterian Church

CONGREGATIONAL UPDATE – December 4, 2020

Dear Ken Mawr family,

I recently discovered that during this particularly difficult year, online Bible searches have increased, and a record number of people have turned to Scripture for guidance and support. A popular Bible app saw searches increase by 80 percent in 2020, totaling nearly 600 million worldwide. And Isaiah 41:10 ranked as the most searched, read, and bookmarked verse on the app: *“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”*

On a personal note, I was just tested for COVID and received the lab result that showed the virus was detected. I am feeling well except for a minor cough and some achiness, which often accompanies this time of the year. I will be isolating at home for 10 days and follow any additional directives from my doctor. Jayne and I plan to record the December 6 and 13 services from our home. I am disappointed that carefully following precautions (mask wearing, hand washing, distancing, etc.) did not prevent my infection, however, I am not afraid and I know the Lord holds me in his care and keeping.

Isaiah’s message is my main message to each of you today: *“So do not fear.”* It seems the coronavirus has cast something of a shadow over our Advent and Christmas celebrations this year. The coronavirus cases in Allegheny County continue to rise and we must do everything we can to keep the spread of the virus in check within our own faith community. In my sermon from the First Sunday of Advent I said, “If we are to see the fragile light which dawns among us in Christ, we must sit for a while in the darkness. If we are to know the presence of God, we must first experience the absence of God. If we are to joyfully celebrate the Savior’s birth, we must first recognize God’s anger, as Isaiah did.” Advent tells us to look directly into the darkness and face it without fear. Christmas is still the wondrous story of Jesus coming to save us. *“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it”* (John 1:5). Yet I have some sobering news...

The Session of KMUPC has made the difficult decision to suspend in-person worship services and Sunday School through Sunday, January 10, 2021. We have chosen to err on the side of caution, after prayerful consideration and discussion. Our Christmas Eve Candlelight Service will be recorded and posted to our YouTube channel and no orders for poinsettias will be taken this year. The building will remain closed to all groups, but we will try to observe regular church office hours. We are tentatively targeting **Sunday, January 17, 2021** as the day we return to 1760 Pine Hollow Road to join in worship and fellowship.

When the present is difficult and the future is uncertain, we long to hear a word of comfort from the Lord. I am also praying that God will give us the grace to be patient, the willingness to hear his word of truth and the deep desire to turn to him in repentant faith. God will give us the courage we need for the days ahead, dear friends. Once again, thanks to all of you who have generously given tithes and offerings throughout the pandemic. We are truly blessed. Join us on YouTube.com for worship or connect through the link at kenmawrchurch.org.

Christmas blessings,

Pastor Karl McDonald