



emmanuel

an affirming community of faith

May 12, 2020

Dear Emmanuel Beloveds,

I have been trying to find better questions to ask people than, “How are you?” If you are like me, that question makes you either put on a brave front and answer, “Hanging in there,” or answer with more honesty and say, “Not well, tired of isolation, need to see people in person, find myself simultaneously weeping and angry.” If you are like me, your days are full of contradictory emotions that are as subject to change as the weather.

It has been a blessing to see the ways each of you, as frustrated and Zoom-fatigued as you might feel, keep loving each other as you work to patiently wait, endure, lament, and pray in this season of uncertainty. I give thanks for your overwhelming generosity to Emmanuel Church and to our Helping Hands Fund, which we have used to help various individuals and organizations make immediate and direct impacts for the most vulnerable in this time of pandemic.

We had hoped to be able to begin some small in-person worship/meetings at EUMC by May 15th, but we realized weeks ago that we will not be able to meet in person for an unknown amount of time. This shift in lifestyle to a virtual beloved community will be much longer than anticipated or hoped. As such, we will continue to follow the science and guidance of the CDC, WHO, and MD state officials. Under no circumstance will we jeopardize the safety or health of our beloved staff and congregation for the sake of being in the building.

The Emmanuel staff has been working to determine our plan for reopening. We are grateful for the wisdom of lay health professionals in our congregation and in the BWCUMC who have been advising us on what we need to be working on now to be ready for a phased reopening. We have been actively participating in denominational meetings with other UMCs, using the guidelines from the BWCUMC on reopening, and reading documents from the CDC and medical professionals for expert scientific advice. Our phased reopening plan is currently being reviewed by Emmanuel’s leadership, and once the leadership reviews and considers the plan, we will release it to all of you.

We will continue to be transparent with all of you about our next steps as our buildings remain closed for in-person activities for an unknown amount of time.

We pray for you to stay resilient and find moments of joy.

Rev. Stephanie Vader, Senior Pastor of Emmanuel UMC