

Let's Not Give Up Meeting Together  
Text: Hebrews 10:19-25  
Kirkpatrick Memorial Presbyterian Church – March 22, 2020  
Rev. Michael F. Atzert

It is so good to see so many of you this morning. Several of you have remarked to me that last Sunday just seemed strange – not being together, not being at the church. I agree. While it was nice to have a Sunday morning off at home, I missed being with you. I missed greeting you and hearing about your week and your prayer concerns and what is going on in your lives.

When I was made aware of this online meeting platform called Zoom, I knew that it would fit so well with our church family. What I especially like about it – in lieu of using a streaming service or posting a video to Facebook or YouTube – is that you all can be more a part of the worship service. We can see faces – we can wave to one another – we can participate together in the worship of our God together. The fellowship amongst us – to me – is just as much a part of our worship of God as the sermon. That is why you will never, EVER see me stop the passing of the peace – or tell everyone to go back to their seats. Going around the sanctuary, sharing the peace of Christ, hugging and shaking hands, greeting one another with smiles and warmth and love is worship. Being together with our church family is worship. This disruption of that due to the Coronavirus outbreak makes it difficult for us to do any of that. Your Session had already put into place some safeguards to help further protect us. But, as we saw, that was not enough, and we are forced to cease with in-person worship and meetings and activities for the foreseeable future.

So here we are. Gathering together for worship. Seeing one another and sending the love and peace of Christ virtually – online – in the best way that we can. This morning's Scripture reading from Hebrews is what I want to share with you this morning – about how we continue to

live out our lives, both individually and corporately as the Body of Christ. “Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.” There is a lot of uncertainty in today’s time. We do not know what the next day, week, weeks, months hold for us. We do not know what this virus is going to do and how many across our community or country will be impacted by it. We do not know what will happen to the economy – both in our country and globally. We do not know where our 401k’s, investments, nest eggs will ultimately land. We do not know what our society will look like on the other side of this Coronavirus. What do we do? How do we deal with our fear, our anxiety, our uncertainty?

We hold unswervingly – unswervingly – to the hope we profess. No matter what happens, God remains in control. No matter how afraid or anxious we may become, “he who promised is faithful.” So, as the writer of Hebrews tells us, “let us draw near to God with a sincere heart.” Let us allow this time of chaos and crisis help to strengthen our faith, draw us nearer to God, and hold on to – when we have nothing else to – our Savior, Jesus Christ.

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.” One of the things that I have been so encouraged by in these last two weeks is that we seem to be kinder, gentler, more compassionate, and willing to give more. Facebook is filled with acts of kindness and offers of goodwill, our politicians seem to – at least at the moment – be willing to work together to bring about good. We, as the church, need to set the example on that. We need to remember to continue to do good and love one another during these trying times. What does that look like for you? How do we do that?

In our church family, we have nurses, EMT’s, those on the front lines. We know that our medical personnel are working incredibly hard. First and foremost, let us pray for them. Let us care for them and love them. Please – and I cannot emphasize this enough – consider sending a

card or note to our nurses and EMT's telling them you care and you are praying for them. Let us love and care for those who are in nursing homes and assisted living places. Again, can we send cards to our shut-ins, to the residents and staff of the Care Center to let them know? Also, perhaps leave a note for your mail carrier or trash collector or banker thanking them – praying for them. Let us spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

“Not giving up meeting together, but encouraging one another.” One of the things that has excited me about this time is that this is our opportunity to think outside the box and try new things. Meeting today for worship in this way – we would have never considered it if we were not in this situation. But let us see how we can meet in other ways. We could use Zoom to pray together. You can get together with church family for dinner and use FaceTime so you can see each other. We can get back to making phone calls and writing letters. There are so many ways we can stay connected.

We will be back together. We will be able to hug and share the peace in person again. We will hold hands for the benediction again. In time. In the meantime, let us not give up meeting together – praying for and with each other – encouraging and loving one another as God has loved us. To God be the glory! Amen.