

January 12th, 2022

Beloved Siblings in Christ,

In our January Newsletter, I wrote about how we will all need to be flexible in this coming year, ready to pivot and adapt as we head into another year of this pandemic filled with anxiety and uncertainty. As much as it saddens me to say so, that time has already arrived,

In response to the rising COVID cases in our county and state, the Spirit of Grace building is closed to all non-essential business for the remainder of January, effective immediately.

This decision was made based on the official COVID guidelines from both the ELCA and UMC, as well as the recommendation from Bishop Laurie of the Oregon Synod office. As we draw closer to the end of the month, we will re-evaluate this decision based on our county's COVID statistics and proceed from there. While I hope and pray this closure will only last through this month, we should all be prepared for the fact that it likely could be longer.

This means that all church groups that have been meeting in-person must either switch to meeting on Zoom or suspend their meetings until we are able to reopen the building. Worship will be held on Zoom, as we have done the last few weeks already. The Zoom information will be accessible on the homepage of our website, and will be e-mailed out directly to you along with the worship bulletin each week. We will also resume virtual fellowship following worship on Sundays! Those of us able to stay after worship will have a chance to check in with one another and stay connected while we are spending time apart. This will begin next week (January 23rd), as our Annual Meeting will be this Sunday immediately following service.

I know that we were all hoping that closing our building again would not be necessary. But as Christians, we are called to put the needs of the greater good before our own individual wants or desires - to protect and support God's people and creation above all. Any action we can take to support the health, safety, and well-being of our community is an action God calls us to take. This is how we live out our identity as baptized children of God - called and sent into a broken world in need of God's loving care.

If you have any questions regarding this decision, you are welcome to reach out to me via email or phone. Know that I will be holding you all close in my heart during this time, eagerly waiting for the time when we can gather together safely once again. In the meantime, keep yourself and your loved ones safe, wear a mask, get vaccinated (and boosted) if you can, and don't lose hope - God has better days in store for us all on the horizon.

In Peace,

Pastor Miranda Bermes-Goller (she/her)

Spirit of Grace Church - Hood River, OR

Office Phone: 541-386-3993

Cell Phone: 708-738-9975

Email: spiritofgracepastor@gmail.com