



April 14, 2020

Dear St. Andrew Church Family,

If it feels like you are being barraged with communications from St. Andrew By-the-Sea recently, it's because you are indeed! With the rapid escalation of COVID-19 across our nation, state and region, your pastors and church leadership are charting new territory as we cope with virtual meetings and services, working remotely, managing our missions, and monitoring our financial health as a congregation given the lack of in-person services. The purpose of this communication is to provide an update on all our actions thus far.

- A Steering Committee of church leaders has been formed, consisting of the Chairs of Church Council, Finance, Trustees, SPPRC, Pastors Neil and Daniel, Lay Delegate to Annual Conference, Lay Leader and Bluffton Steward. This group is meeting via teleconferencing weekly to deal with matters caused by the disruption of social distancing and sheltering in place, as well as the financial impact of it all. At the March 23 Church Council meeting, this group was authorized to make decisions on a timely basis for 60 days, keeping Council informed.
- As our physical church doors closed in mid-March, our Hilton Head campus joined our Bluffton campus in recording and broadcasting church services from a variety of platforms. These services have exceeded our expectations with each passing week as content and viewing attendance has expanded. Holy Week services and the Hilton Head organ concert reflected the great work of our staff and volunteers to present the best of St. Andrew By-the-Sea. We appreciate both our staff and volunteers as well as our wonderful members and guests for tuning in to these special opportunities to share the hope and promise of the Easter season. "He is risen, He is risen indeed!"
- As you may have heard, we are currently developing an App customized and unique to St. Andrew which will be ready in the coming days. But we are excited to announce that TEXT-TO-GIVE is now available. Donating from your phone is just one more way to give the church 24/7, anytime, anywhere. To text your pledge or gift, **text to 77977 then type HHIUMC** (caps are recommended) in the message box and send it. You will be immediately directed to a page with simple steps for giving to St. Andrew. Of course, you may also still give on our website as a guest or through In-Fellowship.
- The Steering Committee decided to apply for a CARES Act *forgivable* loan through SunTrust. This has involved tremendous work by Bruce Seibold, SPPRC Chair and Paula Refice, Financial Secretary to gather all the necessary information and documentation. Finance Chair John Troyer is now leading the process with the bank. Our primary objective in pursuing this loan is to enable the retention of all our staff through June 30.
- Regardless of our success with the loan, the Steering Committee has communicated that we will be covering our payroll for all staff through the end of June. We made this commitment with the confidence that our members will find ways to maintain their pledge and non-pledged gifts in the coming weeks using all the tools that have been communicated – a check in the mail, the website, or using our new Text-To-Give option.
- While Church Council approved a budget for 2020, it took great work by the Finance Committee to review a number of our reserve funds and release them for operational use this year. A special sub-committee of Finance has been convened to evaluate our remaining reserves and make recommendations for carefully managing our finances in the future. We have been blessed in the past by generous contributions that sustained our staff and on-going outreach, but we will be challenged to maintain that without some difficult decisions in the future. Our income this year is being particularly hard hit with the current shelter in place orders all around the country.

Unlike other churches that may have visitors from time to time, beginning with Easter and the Heritage Golf Tournament and through early October, St. Andrew's Hilton Head campus has a significant number of visitors every Sunday, many of whom come back year after year and contribute generously. The Bluffton campus is all about providing a spiritual home for visitors on a year-round basis. One week at a time, the gifts of these visitors are being lost forever during this protracted shut down of our entire society. Even if the country successfully flattens the curve, there is good reason to believe that visitors to our special island will be slow to return.

Given all this background, we wanted to share another way you can show your support for this unusual time in the life of St Andrew...

- In the coming weeks, most Americans can expect to receive \$1200 stimulus checks from the Federal Government. For many people who find themselves out of work, it will be nothing short of a lifeline. However, for many others untouched by the downdraft in the economy to that extent, it will be totally unexpected newfound money. This proposal calls for an appeal to members and friends of St. Andrew to prayerfully consider donating all or a significant portion of their stimulus check to the church to keep our capable staff in place and contribute to our future financial health if you are able to do so. We fully understand the potential need to support other family members who have been affected at this time.

Rest assured, St. Andrew pastors and lay leaders are considering all the ways we might maintain, serve and support our church family during this painful and difficult time. Thank you again for your continued generosity and prayer for our church. Just as the promise of Easter brings a new beginning, we are confident we will emerge even stronger as a community of God, ready to serve Him and lift His name!

Grace and Peace to you all,
Neil Yongue, Senior Pastor
Sarah Coffin, Council Chair

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