



Dear EPC Family and Friends –

Session met for our regular stated meeting on Monday, November 9, and with heavy hearts voted to immediately suspend in-person worship due to rapidly rising COVID-19 cases in Emporia and throughout Lyon County. We will shift to **online worship only from Sunday, November 15, 2020, through January 31, 2021.**

This decision was not made lightly and comes in large part due to the following:

- rapidly rising active cases of COVID-19 currently numbering in the 260s – when we last suspended in-person worship the active case load was running in the 190s;
- the nature of community spread vs. clusters – for much of the pandemic, local active cases have been concentrated in specific work places, educational institutions, retirement communities, etc., i.e. “clustered”; such clusters are increasingly difficult to identify and isolate within our community;
- suspension of county contact tracing – in consultation with County Health, we learned that the significant rise in cases via community spread has overwhelmed local resources, forcing a halt of contract tracing; this means follow-up calls previously made to neighbors who had been in contact with a COVID+ community member are no longer being made, seriously hindering early detection, isolation, and prevention protocols.

Again, **online worship will continue** for the foreseeable future. Our service and mission have never stopped. The work of Christ goes on. The Scarf Project has been a huge success for 2020. The Youth Group is working on socially-distanced, safe ways to help church family celebrate Thanksgiving. And, Worship Committee is actively working to enhance our online worship for Advent and Christmastide. If you are interested and able to help with worship by reading Scripture, sharing memories for a short Advent devotion, donning a costume for the online Christmas pageant, or singing or playing an instrument, please let Pastor Phyl know.

Elders will be calling each member of the EPC family over the next few days to update you on these changes, and we will continue to strive to be in regular communication with our church family about all decisions. Please do not hesitate to reach out to your Session elders or Pastor Phyl any time with questions, concerns, or needs.

As Advent approaches, we sing with the psalmist:

*O Lord of Light, our only hope of glory,
your radiance shines in all who look to you;
come, light the hearts of all in dark and shadow.
For you, O Lord, my soul in stillness waits;
truly my hope is in you.*

*O Spring of Joy, rain down upon our spirits;
our thirsty hearts are yearning for your word;
come, make us whole, be comfort to our hearts.
For you, O Lord, my soul in stillness waits;
truly my hope is in you.*

~My Soul in Stillness Waits, Glory to God #89 from Psalms 62 and 95

*Yours in Christ,
Emporia Presbyterian Church Session*