

Waterford Mennonite Church

Funeral/Memorial Contingency Plan during Novel Coronavirus-COVID19

It is our shared practice that after a death we gather together to mourn. While gathered we celebrate the life of the deceased and together proclaim the resurrection hope we have in Jesus. During the extraordinary circumstances of the COVID19 outbreak, our usual rituals surrounding death and mourning have been interrupted. We grieve these changes and desire to put forth a funeral/memorial contingency plan that allows a pastor to walk with those grieving while not risking more deaths in the celebration of life. In our pastoral care, we commit to following social distancing or other current CDC-recommended public health practices. With that in mind, in the event there is a death during this time we will adhere to the following plan:

For meeting and planning with families at time of death:

- A member of our Pastoral Team – Neil, Cindy, Katie, or Terry – will meet via conference call, Zoom, etc. with the families to plan the burial or interment service.
- A member of the Pastoral Team will continue to provide pastoral care to the family in the weeks and months following the death and burial/interment.
- If families want to set up some tentative dates some months into the future for memorial services, we can do this, reserving the right that we may need to change these arrangements based on the current public health situation.

In the case of burial & body present for visitation:

- Private family visitation at funeral home. Local funeral homes are limiting visitation to only 10 family members present.
- Burial of body with small graveside service soon after death with up to 10 family members present. The service could be recorded and later shared with other family and friends.
- Memorial service at a later date when restrictions on gatherings lifted, with the possibility of a communal meal following the service.

In case of cremation:

- Private family visitation before cremation if desired at funeral home. Local funeral homes are limiting visitation to only 10 family members present.
- Small scattering or interment service soon after death with up to 10 family members present (including the possibility of interment in our Remembering Life Garden). The service could be recorded and later shared with other family and friends.
- Memorial service at a later date when restrictions on gatherings lifted, with the possibility of a communal meal following the service.

Caring for the Congregation following a death in our faith community:

- We will inform the congregation of the death through our normal methods of communication (congregational email, bulletin prayer concerns, etc.).
- We will encourage congregational members to send cards, emails, texts, Facebook messages, online condolences, memorial gifts, and to offer other safe gestures of care in lieu of attending visitation or burial/interment.
- In addition, as we recognize the loss of an immediate communal funeral/memorial service, the pastoral team will be available to meet via conference call, Zoom, etc. with others from the congregation (e.g. household, small group, Sunday School Class, etc.) who desire a space to process and grieve the death of our loved one.

WMC Pastoral Team – Neil Amstutz, Cindy Voth, Katie Misz, Terry Zehr

April 4, 2020

With appreciation to College Mennonite Church for sharing their Funeral Contingency Plan of which we have adapted to fit the needs of Waterford Mennonite Church.