



GOTHENBURG FIRST UNITED
METHODIST
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GOTHENBURG, NE 69138
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WE WILL STILL NEED TO BE CAREFUL WITH ONE ANOTHER

****This is from the LA Times and it was published on March 29, 2020. The story has been verified. We are sharing this for informational purposes only****

A choir of 55 held a practice-- they entered and used hand sanitizer. They didn't share music. They left empty seats between each other... there were no confirmed cases in their town (this incident happened in early March in Mount Vernon, Washington)... and what they learned is that *singing* can cause tiny droplets to spread.

45 of the 55 choir members were later diagnosed with COVID-19. 2 died.

This is confirmed by the group's Facebook page and reported on by several media outlets.

NOTES FROM THE ARTICLE:

*no one appeared ill at choir practice. No one coughed or sneezed.

*A UCLA infectious disease researcher, said it's possible that the forceful breathing action of singing dispersed viral particles in the church room that were widely inhaled. "One could imagine that really trying to project your voice would also project more droplets and aerosols,"

Please read our 3/23/20 official statement below so you understand the circumstances of our rehearsal. We thank you for caring and for supporting the Skagit Valley Chorale.

The Skagit Valley Chorale is a volunteer, non-profit performing arts organization dedicated to bringing great choral music to our community. We held a regular weekly rehearsal on March 10, 2020 in Mount Vernon, WA.

About 55 people (roughly one-half of the group) attended. On the day of the rehearsal, there were no cases of Covid-19 announced in Skagit Valley. There were no closures of schools, restaurants, churches, bowling alleys, banks, libraries, theaters, or any other businesses. The advice from the State of Washington was to limit gatherings to 250 people. There were no recommendations from Skagit County Health Department regarding meeting sizes, but they did state that people over 60 should avoid "large public gatherings." After much deliberation, the chorale's board of directors issued a statement to all members prior to both the rehearsal on March 3 and the one on March 10. It said that anyone showing any symptoms of illness, no matter the cause, should not attend rehearsals. Also, that anyone who felt their health or safety was in jeopardy should not attend rehearsals. Each member was left to determine for him/herself whether to attend. At no time was anyone pressured to attend if they were uncomfortable doing so, and while we normally record the attendance at rehearsals, it was not done at this time. At all times, the Chorale followed the guidance of local and state health authorities in decision-making processes.

Within days of the March 10 rehearsal, things changed dramatically. The first case in Skagit County was announced. Schools cancelled sports, arts, and other extra-curricular gatherings. Senior centers and senior housing facilities started limiting visitors. Activities and concerts, including our own concert scheduled for April, were cancelled. Libraries were closed. The federal government announced its 15-day "social distancing" policy in an order intended to curb the infection rate.

While all of this was going on, members of our group started to feel ill. By Saturday, March 14, there were six people who were feverish or otherwise not well. They were in communication with each other, and several of those people got tested. By Monday, the 16th, twenty people had symptoms and we had the first positive test result. By Monday evening, 24 were ill, some of whom attended the rehearsal on March 10, some who had only attended on March 3, and some of whom did not attend either rehearsal. By Tuesday evening March 17, we had 3 confirmed positive tests. One of our members, who is an MD, volunteered to interface with the County Health Department. The Health Department was provided with our member roster, and contacted every person in the group, regardless of whether they attended rehearsals on the 3rd and/or the 10th, and regardless of whether they were having symptoms. Each person was questioned in depth and received advice about what to do. By Friday, the 20th, we had 10 confirmed cases, and today, we know of at least 21 confirmed positives and 30 people (members and significant others) who are ill. This is a virulent and

serious disease, whose symptoms and devastation are still unknown and impossible for us manage. Sadly, one of our members died yesterday, and we have another who is hospitalized in serious condition. Out of respect to family members, we will not be providing names of those affected. The Health Department has that information, and we hope it can be used to advance the understanding and treatment of this serious illness. We urge everyone to practice social distancing, to isolate yourself for your own safety and that of others, and to stay in contact with your health care provider and/or the Health Department. This is a medical crisis that is all around us, and each person needs to do his or her part to help prevent further illness and deaths.

MAY BIRTHDAY'S

- | | |
|---|----------------------------|
| 4– Jim Hotz | 27– Tucker Bartlett |
| 5– Robert Lane | 28– Amanda Larson |
| 6– Bowe Oliver | 30– Laron Peters |
| 8– Lois Shea, Pastor Jamie, Maverick Macek | 31– Regi Lane, Brian Macek |
| 11– Karen Peterson, Jodi Macek | |
| 12– Harold Vass | |
| 14– Glenn Bartels, Beck Groene | |
| 15– Milan Franzen | |
| 16– Zeb Blauvelt | |
| 17– Evelyn Miller | |
| 19– Taylor Burge | |
| 20– Tom Abramson, Nick Kirkpatrick,
David Loostrom, Grant Sell | |
| 21– Ty Bartels, Tara Foster
Carolyn Peterson, Kelly Phillips | |
| 24– Emma Jorgenson | |
| 26– Dennis Kirkpatrick | |





Pastor's Perspective

For those of you who are wondering about when we will be worshipping together again in person, I would like to share this message from our Bishop, Rev. Dr. Ruben Saenz, Jr.:

"I do not want to increase fear, but gathering in closed quarters, singing, our contact rituals, and decreased ventilation in our gathering spaces creates a ripe environment for viral transmission. I strongly urge [us] to err on the side of caution. To gather in person or not for worship at this time is not a matter of faith vs. faithlessness, or about some conspiracy to suppress Christianity; this is about honoring and doing our part individually and collectively to protect God's sacred gift of life, especially for the most vulnerable in our communities and our world."

Rev. Chris Genene Jorgensen responds: "This is what strong, Christian leadership looks like at such a time as this. We can worship God in a million ways as we stay safe at home. God is not bound by our sanctuaries. We can encounter God in all times and all places...and in new and creative ways."

I remember that John Wesley began his rules for Methodists with: "Do no harm"! As United Methodists in Gothenburg, we will continue to love and care for one another being physically distant while reaching out and responding to the needs we find. I know that this is hard work.

I miss you. I miss being in the same place with you as we sing...and visit...and pray...and dream. And I know that you are missing each other and are hungry to get back together again so that things can be normal. But the "normal" of 6 weeks ago will not be ever again. Everything has changed, and there can be a gift in the change if we use this time to be transformed in the way we reach out—not only to the ones we know and love, but also to strangers who join us in one way or another. Our digital presence and our virtual worship allows us to reach beyond ourselves in ways that we had never before imagined.

The Apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans that, "all things work together for good for those who love God and are called according to God's purpose." It's clear that in times such as this, as we look to God for support and answers and lean into God's strength and wisdom, we will find that even in the midst of crisis, God truly is working all things together for our good. It is part of the gift of the hour.

As difficult as all of this is, let us not squander to gift of this disruption in our lives. Let us use this time as an opportunity to look at our world with new eyes, to hear with newly opened ears and hearts broken wide open to receive what God has planted there. Let us continue to practice loving one another with compassion and hope as we gather to worship and study in our homes and with our families.

I invite you to come join us for worship with our video Sunday service (Facebook, YouTube, webpage)—and then join us for fellowship time by Zoom! As we grow more comfortable with this new technology, we recognize that God has given us a time to create a new way of engaging one another and sharing the Good News of Christ.

Fear not! As the angels proclaim often in our scripture. May you stay well, and live creatively into our new normal. Even in that we know that the ever-present love of God will be with us. Blessings and peace—Pastor Jamie

*"Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but wise."
~Ephesians 5:15*



PASTORAL CHANGE ANNOUNCEMENT FROM BISHOP SAENZ

April 19, 2020

Dear Friends,

The cabinet and I are please to announce the Pastor Grace Gichuru will be appointed as your pastor beginning July 1, 2020. This appointment concludes a long process during which the staff-parish committee of your church has been consulted along with Pastor Grace. We have prayed asking for God’s wisdom about the best available leadership for your church and this is our decision.



As with all appointments, this one will be fixed during the annual conference closing session in May 2020. I extend my best wishes and prayers to you all during this transition of pastoral leadership for your congregation.

Grace and peace

Bishop Ruben Saenz, Jr.

CAMP COMECA IS CALLING YOU

Please check out www.comeca.camp to see the many camps that your child/youth can attend this summer at Camp Comeca. All registration is to be done online. Funds are available to your family to help with the cost of the camps. One half of the camp cost is available to each camper who attends. Check out Camp Comeca site and let Lynnette Stevens know if you would like a scholarship to a summer camp.



LOOKING FOR BOOKS

Celebrate Recovery is working on a library for A New Hope at the church and A New Hope jail ministry. If you have any Christian devotionals or books for helping heal hurts, we would appreciate them. The inmates are asking for devotionals, journals and Bibles.

CLASS OF 2020

We would like to feature our class of 2020 in next months issue of the newsletter. Please send Becky a photo of your senior student and tell us about their post graduate plans and we will celebrate them!!

