

Dear Larry,

Greetings and thank you for your compassionate and heartfelt e-mail and leadership about this virus and our response to it. Caring so deeply for our residents as we do it is always troubling when something that can be so threatening to their health becomes so prevalent. The fact that there isn't much they can do to cure it also adds to those concerns.

When reflecting on this health crisis I rest in the truth of and pray the words of Psalm 46: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early. The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."

When I pray I visualize a hedge of God's spirit of protection surrounding our communities and those within them. Our Lord will be with us through it all – thanks be to God! The "congregation" here at Pitman has been keeping it in our prayers each week. At my Bible studies and services, we pray for God as the Great Physician to bring healing to our world and to protect us from the virus.

I have had residents and their families mention their concerns over the Coronavirus to me. One family has been upset to see what has been happening at the nursing facility in Washington state that was stricken with it. After voicing their concerns about that facility they stated that they feel reassured about their mom being at Pitman because of how well they have witnessed us handling other illnesses as a community.

The residents who have mentioned it speak of the fear of the unknown since it is ever present in the news, but also know that we take their health and wellness seriously based on how serious we take the stomach virus and flu when they occur here. Visitors also mentioned to me after seeing our signs when entering and having to answer the travel questions on the sign in kiosk that they are glad to see that we are taking it all seriously and trying to stay ahead of it.

I again want to thank you for ensuring that we are not only being proactive in our approach to the virus, but also that we are looking after the spiritual health of our residents, families and associates. It is such a gift to work for an organization that understands and appreciates the importance of our spiritual and emotional well-being.

If there is anything more I can do to help in this effort, please feel free to reach out to me.

Blessings,

Rev. Kim Wecht

Director of Mission and Pastoral Care

United Methodist Communities at Pitman

Dear Larry,

The Shores' family are preparing as best we can. From the spiritual perspective, there is some concern and that is expected. However, we are blessed to be living in the midst of renovations. I hear more comments regarding the beautiful atmosphere and excitement that is coming with the new open space.

As stated before, there are a few who have voiced concern about the virus. I remind them that we are doing all we can and should be doing. I also remind them of past challenging events both good and bad which they have faced and lived through. Although at the time it was scary, even frightening, they survived. In the midst of it all they faced they learned to continue with their lives and not focus on what could be, but rather who controls what will be. In most cases they begin to tell me what they have come through over the years.

In any case, it encourages them to deal with the issue if and when it comes. We are facing that challenge now as well. We as leaders in our communities are doing all that John Wesley continues to call us to do. God has entrusted us to keep our community families as safe, calm and assured in spirit as we can. After that, God will do the rest.

In this season we may feel overwhelmed with reports of new cases and additional deaths. Whatever comes, God doesn't give us what we can handle, but one thing we must not only know, but remember, He will help us handle what we have been given. He's got each one of us, because each one of us have been called to be exactly where we are in this season of uncertainty. God has equipped each of us with what we will need to draw on as we face this "Goliath" of sorts. He knows we must rely on Him and expects us to do so as we pray in faith. He will lead us through the challenges to come. After all, hasn't He already proven Himself to be faithful in each of our lives and our communities?

When we awaken this morning, we believed that we would get up, get dressed and drive to work. We did just that! This is the same God who protects and directs us as we deal with this and our other challenges, both in our positions and our lives. Let us trust in God's track record and rest in His wisdom and continue to meet this challenge head on! After all, He is the only one who is never caught by surprise and is in control of anything He allows in any season. He has got this!

Continuous blessings for you in the days to come!

Rev. Marcia Stanford
Director of Mission and Pastoral Care
United Methodist Communities at The Shores



Dear Larry,

Thank you for this email. I am hearing much of the same concerns at Bristol Glen as had already been expressed. Marcia and Kim have written great responses. I would echo what my denomination wrote in the Presbyterian Churches office of Theology's pastoral response to the Coronavirus:

- Let us be faithful and vigilant in our prayer for those nations, communities, families and individuals most affected by this outbreak, and for the medical personnel and government officials seeking to respond. Let us resist and reject fear and suspicion based on ethnicity or nationality; this virus is affecting people of all races and ages. Let us be generous in supporting organizations that provide assistance and support public health in our area and around the world.
- Above all, let us remember and rejoice that "nothing in life or in death can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Brief Statement of Faith; Rom. 8:38–39).

Peace,

Rev. Salvatore Seirmarco
Director of Mission and Pastoral Care
United Methodist Communities at Bristol Glen