To the people of Bethlehem Stonepile UMC and Springvale UMC:

Another week has passed. Covid19 has changed a lot of things in each of our lives. March 16th I had an eye exam and ordered new glasses. They were mailed to me eventually but still can’t go to get them fitted since the optometrist is closed. Like everyone else I am still waiting to get a haircut. I seldom use the drive through window at our bank but for now I have no choice since the lobby of our bank is closed. You all understand. The inconveniences I am going through cannot compare with what some of you are enduring in your work and life. You all could make a more significant list of the changes in your life that Covid19 has brought. But we are making it! Changes have been made and we will get through this!

There certainly have been changes in the life of our churches. We have not worshiped together in our sanctuaries since March 15, but we have worshiped. The Administrative Council for Bethlehem Stonepile for the month of March was cancelled. A family at Springvale was to have a baptism at the end of March, but we were not together for that to happen. Our Easter Egg Hunt and Breakfast for the children of our area was cancelled. Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services had to be changed from in person services to online. And, of course, it was hard for our congregations not to be able to be together for Easter celebration. At Bethlehem Stonepile we had to postpone a special Children’s Service. Yes, a lot of changes.

But look how we have adapted. Many of you reach out to one another through phone calls or social media. Alissa and Pastor Larry continue to check on our shut-ins and folks in nursing homes even though they can’t go there in person, and Alissa keeps coming up with ideas on how we can continue in ministry. Teresa continues to field phone calls and inquiries to keep the administration of our churches running as smoothly as possible. Some folks made a “yard visit” to one of the dear souls of our charge. We have young people going through a confirmation class that is unlike any confirmation class we have had before. Glenda Attig learned how to do “Zoom” meetings and the confirmands have still been joining together. We hope to confirm them as members of our congregations in the near future. We had a chicken barbeque scheduled for May 9 to benefit our summer mission trip. A group that John Wertz is part of is leading that for us. It will still happen, but it will be a “drive through.” You can support the mission by coming and getting your chicken dinner, but without getting out of your car. Our Bethlehem Stonepile congregation is in the midst of a year when we are celebrating the church’s 200th Anniversary. Quite a milestone! And we are trying to add some personal touches to our online worship each Sunday. With that in mind we invite to video a greeting from your family to your church family. No more than 10 seconds long – just a greeting for your family to the other families in our churches. Email these to the Charge Office at bethstp250@comcast.net, and we will add these to our worship on Sundays. We are adapting. It will certainly be a year that will be remembered. But we are still the church and we are doing what we can.

So, please, continue to be the Church. Reach out and help each other in any way you can. We will celebrate together once again. Until then, God bless each of you.

Pastor Bud