Who could have imagined where we would be today? Children home from school; parents working from home; public transportation stopped; sporting events, weddings, church services canceled; businesses closed--the list goes on. God has brought the world to a standstill. COVID-19 has changed everyone’s everyday life. It’s scary. It’s jarring. It’s life-threatening. It’s no joke. It is also an opportunity. We, as believers, have been thrust into a place we’ve never been before. With that in mind, how do we reach out and help when everyday life is so limiting?

The purpose of this special issue of the Mercy Minute is to invite you to encourage each other through this peculiar time.

COVID-19 Pandemic Response (CPR) Fund
The Committee on Diaconal Ministries recently opened up the COVID-19 Pandemic Response (CPR) Fund. This fund will be used to help churches and individuals especially hard-hit by the COVID-19 virus. We anticipate great needs locally and regionally. All those who are able ought to be encouraged to contribute generously to their local deacons fund and to their presbytery diaconal fund. (Soon, many will be receiving economic stimulus checks, despite having lost no income; could that be shared with those in need?) For those who are able to give above and beyond local and regional needs, we invite to give toward this fund to participate in meeting needs in the OPC or within our sister churches around the world.

To give online, please direct them to give.opc.org. To give by check, please go to: opccdm.org/donate/ for instructions. Questions or concerns, please contact us: diaconalministries@opc.org.
A Perspective on the COVID-19 Pandemic From the Front Lines

The novel coronavirus 2019 (commonly referred to as COVID-19) has taken healthcare systems and their front-line providers by storm. Early in February, even though most nurses and system administrators were well aware of the viral outbreak in China, there were very few changes in providing patient care. Only a few short weeks ago, nurses were being told that they did not need masks unless they were in the presence of a suspected COVID-19 patient. As of March 26th, most hospitals have gone to full personal protective equipment (PPE) while caring for these patients – and wearing a mask while on duty, the entirety of one’s shift – no matter the unit. This speaks to the contagious nature of the virus and the fact that many patients will present for care before they are suspected of the virus. The primary symptoms are fever, cough, and shortness of breath. There are approximately 1200 reported positive cases [here] in North Carolina, up about 326% from last week.

The statewide stay-at-home order is only a part of how this has affected healthcare workers. Many hospital departments have closed or are greatly reduced. For example, only critical surgeries are permitted – and many ordinary outpatient services are no longer operating. Most hospitals have a no visiting policy to reduce viral spread – and there is a sense of fear and intensity that I have never experienced in over three decades of nursing. Social media seems to be an outlet for many healthcare personnel to express their anger, frustration with hospital policy, and general angst. Although emergency and intensive care workers seem to have the greatest opportunities for exposure, lab, radiology, and other hospital-wide services are also being widely exposed.

Many healthcare workers have realistic concerns about safety for themselves and their families, but they are also dedicated to the care of the sickest. There has been great comradery in this stressful time, and a great outpouring of love from members of the community. Meals have been delivered to nursing units, masks have been sewn and donated – large corporations are donating funds and goods. The church has a unique opportunity to show the love of Christ. It is a great thing to see communities and professionals bond together in a time of trouble, but Christians know that this trial is in the hands of our heavenly Father. Believers must continue to pray that our Lord will protect the church, and use this virus for His glory and our good. Pray that believing care providers will testify to our ultimate trust in Christ.

List of Streaming OPC Worship Services

Are you looking for a church service to watch during the COVID-19 shutdown? David Barr, Deacon at Emmanuel OPC, Kent, WA has created a list of OP Churches that are streaming their services online. You can find the list by going to the CDM website: opccdm.org. Instructions on how to add your church stream can be found on the Google sheet. This is a great time to hear from pastors all over the OPC. There are blessings in this trying time! Thank you, David, for this great resource!

How Can the Church Help Healthcare Workers?

We’ve asked a few healthcare workers how they believe the church can help them in their work on the “front lines” of this pandemic. Here’s what they told us:

- **Pray.** Knowing the church is supporting us, praying for us is huge! Anything that displays this would be greatly appreciated.
- **Pray.** This is an amazing time for Christian healthcare workers to be witnessing--not only to patients but to co-workers. People are frightened. Pray the Lord would guide them in that and bless their efforts for His glory.
- **Send** thank you cards or notes with your appreciation for their work—even to those you don’t know!
- **Provide** meals for the families.
- **Donate** personal protective equipment--any unopened boxes of gloves, unused masks, disinfecting wipes, hand sanitizer, face shields, goggles, eye shields, and isolation or surgical gowns. Please note: the use of home-made masks is being disputed, so check with the facility to whom you’ll be providing before making them.
- **Help** those healthcare workers with childcare. This is a burden we face as we try to do our job during this stressful time.
- **Offer** up your skills to help with our children’s schoolwork. This can be done remotely in some situations.
- **Ask** us how you can help. This is a unique time for all of us. We all need to do our part in serving others.

Do you get a copy of the Mercy Minute to your inbox?
Contact the CDM Administrator, David Nakhla
david.nakhla@opc.org

For the full edition of this Mercy Minute, visit our website:
OPCCDM.ORG/resources/mercy-minute