This is Oaklette United Methodist Church calling with our weekly update of the impact of Covid-19 upon our congregation. As many of you may already know our Bishop, while in conjunction with the Governor’s plan to reopen the state, has limited worship to “drive-in worship” only; that is worship in the parking lot. But because of the strict restrictions of the CDC as well as the guidance of our Conference we here at Oaklette feel that it would be too burdensome upon our congregation to gather in our parking lot (must stay in cars, cannot use the bathrooms or enter the church building, etc.) we have decided to continue live streaming our worship service on Facebook Live and not gather in the parking lot.

Our Lay Leader Don Moody and pastor are currently at work in the creation of a Healthy Church Team. This team which is required for any church within the Virginia Conference will be charged with developing and implementing a plan for reopening the church. At this time, we do not yet have a target date in mind for our reopening. Due to social distancing restrictions, the use of personal protection equipment, and the extensive amount of protocols that must be put into place before we can even gather in person for worship; in all likelihood we don’t envision gathering either in the parking lot or in the building for quite some time. We will continue to worship on Facebook Live at 11am on Sunday mornings. We will also be posting a recording of the worship on our website on Monday mornings. If you would like; we can send you a link to that recording by email. Please send your email address to Lori Hazlett at ljhazlett@cox.net.

I leave you with these inspiring words from Deuteronomy 31:8: “T*he Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”*

No matter what lies ahead, we can rest assured that the Lord Himself will go before us. For some, they will have to deal with the fallout of daily family tension from everyone cooped up together. For others, they face job loss and immense financial stress. Others will have to face loss of family members and dear ones. And here at Oaklette we will have to be patient a little while longer as we look forward to the time that we can all gather together in person to worship the Lord.

The good news is that through every trial we face, we can *know* that God walks with us. Our job is to remain in-step with His Spirit, and not let discouragement take over.

Let us pray: Gracious God, help us slow down during this time of phasing into our new normal, and get back in-step with You. Help us to trust You to lead the way, to go before us, with us, and behind us. In the name of Your Son, we will not be afraid or discouraged. Amen.