



&



April 2020

Dear Youth Summer Mission Families,

In this most unprecedented time in our lives, we hope you are doing well. We realize that as the days and weeks continue to be full of minute to minute information, you are probably all wondering about the status of our Youth Summer Mission trips (Side x Side and HOPE @ Home). We hope you will find the information you are seeking as you read this letter.

As you all know, Side x Side has been scheduled for June 6-14, 2020. With the newest recommendations of *shelter in place* continuing through April 30 (at least) we are finding it difficult to continue planning for that date. Some things we've had to consider:

- 1) Tuition payments cover about half of our trip: without our congregation being able to gather to offer their generous Shareholder contributions and our inability to hold fundraisers, the other half of the trip costs is difficult to secure.
- 2) With ever fluctuating calendars for both youth and adults, keeping these dates on the calendar is questionable from an attendance/participation standpoint.
- 3) With universities across the country closed, we have not heard whether or not UAB will be able to host us and may not know that until a week or two prior to our need to depart.
- 4) With guidelines for groups no larger than 10, social distancing, etc., mission partners are not able, currently, to insure our volunteerism.
- 5) With economic uncertainty, use of vacation time during these "shelter in place" mandates, etc., we are uncertain how many of our adults will be able to keep these dates open for travel, thus lending us to consider our Safe Sanctuary commitment and supervision ratio of adults to youth.
- 6) All of this leads to not being able to order items, determine numbers for registrations/reservations, etc.

We can safely say we WILL NOT be going to Birmingham in June. What we are saying is "stay tuned". We are not ready to completely cancel Side x Side or HOPE @ Home. Our hope is to gather at a later date in the summer, providing something for our Youth Summer Mission participants. That *something* might look quite different than what we've come to know as Side x Side and HOPE @ Home, but the

one thing that will be constant is God will be in the center, and our teams will be able to come together.

In regard to Hope @ Home, our serving partners in and around Chicago are struggling with the same “no groups larger than 10”, “shelter in place” as well as currently redesigned schedules for caring for their clients. Therefore, they are unable to keep us on the calendar and will not know until we are closer to our June 23-25 dates whether or not we are able to continue our partnership. Our Youth Summer Mission fundraising efforts also affect our ability to cover the remaining costs of Hope @ Home not covered by tuition.

Side x Side and Hope @ Home dates for this summer will be determined by the many variables the church calendar will face once we are able to come together again. We will hope to have information to share with you as soon as possible.

We TRULY share in your disappointment. We have always said that safety was the number one priority of Side x Side and Hope @ Home. That philosophy remains as we look to follow the guidelines of the CDC, the United Methodist Church, and our government.

Registration will NOT remain on our website for either trip for the foreseeable future. If you have already registered, we will do our best to manage the financial portion of registrations as we learn more about what our options for the summer become. If you have questions regarding any of this, please don't hesitate to contact Gaye Lynn.

Thank you for saying “yes” to be the hands and feet of Jesus. God will continue to provide ways for us to do that and we will listen for His call.

Continue to pray for ALL who are affected by this temporary new normal. We are all learning along the way and striving to be good stewards of our time, talents, and gifts while staying safe.

Remember, when we pray God has three answers: “yes”, “no”, “I have something better in mind”. In regard to this year's planning we're hearing that *He has something better in mind.*

Blessings,

Gaye Lynn and the Youth Summer Missions Planning Team