



June 2, 2020

Dear Richfield UMC,

It's been my joy to witness many of you embracing technology and the internet to stay connected in these times of physical distancing. I want to help you stay safe as you experience the online world, especially if some of this is new to you. Therefore, I have a scam warning, a harassment warning, and resources for getting familiar and comfortable with technology.

Scam Warning: It's come to my attention some people have received fake messages from a bogus email account purportedly from me. These emails can look authentic, using our church's graphics or information, and often ask for immediate assistance or a reply from you. This is known as a "phishing scam." Sadly, someone creates an email address that *looks* real, then goes "phishing" for good people like you to take the bait and scam you out of money - all because you want to help! However, that email address does *not* belong to Rev. Nate Melcher or the church. Richfield UMC clergy or staff will *never* solicit money, gift cards, or other "assistance" with this kind of email. Staff email will *always* come from richfieldumc.org. We are working with our computer IT vendor to address this. **WHAT TO DO:** If you receive a similar email in the future, please do not reply in any way. Send me a copy of the email, block the sender, and delete the original email, thank you.

Harassment Warning: Unfortunately, I've recently received "cyber bullying" in my work email. If you receive messages about me from cyber bullies, please disregard them. As we build our online presence and reach new people, sadly it becomes more possible someone unrelated to our church could try to harass us online. Please do not give them the provocation they are looking for. **WHAT TO DO:** Never give out any information about members or staff to someone you don't know. If you see or receive inflammatory remarks or inappropriate comments about our church, members, or staff through our online platforms like Facebook or YouTube, please do not engage the harasser. Please report it to me or a staff person immediately, thank you.

In these times of heightened tensions, I want to assure you neither of these matters are related to each other, nor to my recent ministry work in the community or for our church.

Technology Competency: I am always seeking resources for our church members who are overwhelmed by technology. If you feel this way, try <https://digitalliteracyassessment.org/> where you can take free essential skills assessments about computers, the internet, email, social media, etc. If you don't know where to start to buy computer equipment, try this article: <https://cnet.com/how-to/heres-the-best-computer-for-seniors-and-elderly-parents/>. Finally, if you are helping someone to get online for the first time, these tips can help make that experience go smoothly: <https://techxplore.com/news/2020-03-relatives-online-covid-.html>.

Let's help each other stay safe online so we can keep connecting as a church family!

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