

## **A Pastoral Letter to Congregations of the Heartland Conference UCC Regarding COVID 19**

Dear Authorized Ministers and Congregational Leaders,

The Coronavirus has us baffled! We find ourselves in a conundrum. We don't want to be afraid because we are persons of faith. We don't want to give in to fear and anxiety. Yet, we are called to act responsibly.

So, what shall we do? Shall we cancel Sunday worship, meetings, and gatherings?

**Following Governor proclamations today, we recommend that congregations not gather in person for worship for the remainder of March. We recognize that each congregation has authority to ultimately make its own decisions about worship. However, the seriousness of this pandemic calls us to recommend this strategy to protect the people we serve and the communities in which we are located.**

Additionally, we affirm the following:

- First, we are a people of faith who are called to be a people of courage and hope especially in time of anxiety and confusion. So, be a non-anxious presence. Trust that the God of resurrection will always walk with us through times of crucifixion and transform them into resurrection and new life.
- Second, make communal decisions on how to proceed. Be attentive to safeguarding the larger community and make decisions with the wisdom of your church leaders rather than alone.
- Third, The God of Resurrection has graced us with brains and hearts and common sense. Use them. The Holy Spirit/Wisdom is within you. Trust the Spirit's guidance and work with others to ensure the wellness of all.
- Fourth, the responsibility to follow the guidelines of state and local authorities. And stay home if you feel unwell.
- Fifth, should you choose to worship, we recommend that communion and the passing of the peace be suspended for the remainder of the month. While this may seem overzealous, the paramount concern is for health and safety.

We recommend meetings scheduled through the end of April be held digitally as much as possible. For now, we plan for the Association and Conference offices to remain open. Please watch for updates as this situation unfolds.

Please know that together we hold all of you in our prayers and are glad to be available to offer support in this extraordinary time. The following page lists resources to aid in online worship, online giving and other pertinent information to foster healthy community and support in this extraordinary time.

May God bless us all with wisdom, strength and patience,

Rev. Patricia Battle

Rev. Dan Busch

Rev. Nayiri Karjian

Rev. Carl Robinson

Rev. David Long-Higgins

**Here are some additional resources that may be helpful to you in this season:**

**A Faithful Response, with Worship, to the Coronavirus:** This document serves as a resource for faithful tips and considerations for congregations. Updates will be added as circumstances change. This resource has information about online giving which may be helpful to you in this season.

March 9, 2020, UCC News: [UCC churches establish protocols, preach awareness, not panic as COVID-19 cases grow](#)

A word from the Rev. Traci D. Blackmon, UCC Associate General Minister for Justice & Local Ministries  
**FLYER/BULLETIN INSERT**

**PANDEMIC PREPARATIONS:** An excellent resource from Southern New England Conference UCC

**Church leaders urge education, caution and common sense as U.S. coronavirus cases increase - UCC News story February 28, 2020**

**Factsheet: Workplace, school and home guidance from the Centers for Disease Control**

Latest guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC): <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

**World Health Organization updates and preparedness resources**

**UCC Disaster Ministries "A Disaster Preparedness Manual for Churches"** (no "pandemics" section - yet! - but great counsel for preparing for any sort of disaster)

**UCC Disaster Ministries joins ecumenical coronavirus response - January 29, 2020**

**Centers for Disease Control VIDEO: 5 things to know about COVID-19**

**Information from the Insurance Board:** <https://www.insuranceboard.org/safety-resources/>

#### **INFORMATION ABOUT WORSHIP AND THE VIRUS**

Click here: <https://livingwaterone.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Worship-Coronavirus.pdf>

#### **RESOURCE FROM NEW YORK CONFERENCE UCC – IF YOU DECIDE TO GATHER FOR WORSHIP**

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#inbox/FMfcgxwHMGNmLmZzVtjNjdxHkwGwcTsq>

#### **JOIN SOME OF OUR CONGREGATIONS WHO LIVE STREAM THEIR SERVICES**

- First Congregational Hudson: <https://boxcast.tv/channel/nbvptgpa4ho5h2rtf7ya>
- Bath UCC: <https://www.bathucc.org/>

#### **RESOURCES TO VIDEO STREAM YOUR CONGREGATION'S WORSHIP:**

Webinar from WI Council of Churches:

<https://www.wichurches.org/2020/03/11/webinar-creating-live-streamed-worship/>

How to use Facebook Live to stream your church service, from UMC:

<https://www.resourceumc.org/en/content/use-facebook-live-to-stream-your-church-events>

#### **FOR UP TO DATE INFORMATION FROM UNITED CHURCH FUNDS:**

- [CDC COVID-19 Updates](#)
- [CDC New Travel Alerts](#)
- [World Health Organization Updates](#)
- [Coronavirus Resources From the UCC](#)