

March 13, 2020

Dear Ones,

What strange times we live in! I imagine you all are closely monitoring the unfolding of the COVID-19 virus. I find myself doing the same.

I am concerned for the wellbeing of our community and I am constantly weighing options in determining what is a most prudent plan of action. Your Board and I are in communication as we try to find our way.

I realize that this is a constantly evolving situation and a plan we come up with today might be scratched tomorrow.

As you may already know by now the most vulnerable are the older population with pre-existing conditions such as heart, lung disease, or diabetes. No doubt you have been weighing your options and movements in the community. You have likely weighed the risks of attending church.

Today, the Unitarian Universalist Association President, Susan Frederick-Gray, sent out a mass communication to all UU churches strongly suggesting they suspend Sunday Services.

I participated in a conference call with the UU ministers from our region on Thursday evening. As of today, everyone has suspended Sunday Services. Some may still keep office hours; some will only work from home.

For the time being, we too are suspending Sunday Services. We are making plans for live-streaming as well as virtual meetings. We will send out detailed information on how to access our live-streamed services when or if we switch over to that.

As far as special groups such as Women's Book Group, Men's Group, etc. we leave it up to your best judgment and wisdom in determining if you wish to meet in person or by phone or virtually. Fortunately, today's technology allows for many possibilities, it shrinks the world and makes togetherness possible even if through a screen. I do realize, of course, that there is a learning curve to using these platforms. I believe we are up to the challenge.

If you cannot leave your house and are low on supplies, don't hesitate to let us know. We are going to do our best to bring you the supplies needed. We also have some funds available that we can and will tap into if you are experiencing financial hardship. Please, don't hesitate to contact me (269.352.2412) or Miriam (269.993.8758) if you are in need.

Let us stay in touch with each other more than ever before. Let us check in on each other at regular intervals. It is very possible that we are going to stay away from each other for quite some time, thus keeping in touch is even more important. Let's make sure that we cope well with the relative isolation. Let us support each other with compassion, a huge heart, open listening, and scintillating conversations.

Your leadership and I are working on creating a sustainable system of making sure we check in with each other frequently even if for short times. Please, look for information in the coming days. As a matter of fact, we will make sure to communicate with all of you often. It is important that we all stay in the know. We also look forward to hearing from you.

During my time of prolonged illness if I learned anything about our community it is that we care for one another with a huge heart and unwavering commitment. We hold each other up, we offer emotional support, we step in as we are needed. We have created a Beloved Community that can sustain us through such strange and trying times.

Perhaps never the words of John Donne rang as true as they do now:

*No man is an island,
Entire of itself.
Each is a piece of the continent,
A part of the main.
If a clod be washed away by the sea,
Europe is the less.
As well as if a promontory were.
As well as if a manor of thine own
Or of thine friend's were.
Each man's death diminishes me,
For I am involved in mankind.*

Therefore, send not to know

For whom the bell tolls,

It tolls for thee.

We are all interconnected, we all need each other, and in this community, we choose each other. Here's to living through these days calmly, wisely, with much care and love for one another. We shall overcome.

Big Love,

Rev. Gy Ludvig-McCartney

Consulting Minister

UU Community Church of SW Michigan