

Dear friends,

As we are all aware, our nation and world are facing the impact of the outbreak of COVID-19, also known as the Corona virus. We have been closely monitoring the situation including recommendations from our UCC leadership, the CDC, and medical professionals within our local community. The critical thing for our communities to do is to slow the rate of the epidemic so medical facilities are not overwhelmed. The most effective way to slow the spread of the virus is social distancing, or in other words, minimizing contact with others.

At this time, The Gift Team Board and leadership of the United Church of Christ of Hummelstown has suspended all worship and church based gatherings effective immediately through March 29th. We are in the process of setting up plans for continuing to celebrate Sunday worship online, with materials available in our regular weekly email. This suspension of activities includes Sunday worship, Faith Formation, Bible Study and Choir Rehearsals.

Plans are coming in for worship gathering online, and will be communicated this Thursday by our regular weekly email. I will be setting up an online meeting for Bible Study this week, where you can call in from your phone at home, or use the video chat feature to join in as well.

Pastor Beth and Mary Lou will continue to work from the office, but are limiting public contact to minimum, and working as individually as possible. At this time, we both feel confident in this action, however, if this shifts, we will move to working at home. If you need to get a hold of anyone, or aren't sure if anyone is in the office, please feel free to contact Pastor Beth on her cell phone at any time. Text, video chat and phone calls are all welcome.

What is being cancelled or postponed?

- Church Game Night will be cancelled this month.
- Worship and Bible Study will be held online, details to follow
- Drag Queen Bingo will be postponed to a later date, to be determined
- Fourth Tuesday lunch at Dafnos will be cancelled for March
- Fourth Thursday Theology will occur online, details to follow

How long will this last?

We are currently planning a two week cancelation time and then will make another assessment as to the timing of a return to in person gatherings. We will continue to follow CDC and medical recommendations in the coming weeks.

How can we continue to engage with the church when we aren't meeting in person?

The number one thing to think about is to stay connected, but to find new ways to do it! Pray for those affected by illness and for who this time of intentional isolation is hardest, as well as those who are still working in "essential" industries who are continuing to be exposed to large numbers of the public and are therefore at risk.

- Call, email or send letters or postcards. As we are more separated, we will all begin to feel more lonely or discouraged. You know well those who are already feeling the strain of this time apart, and they are in need of more intentional check ins. Take some extra time to check in by virtual means or send a letter saying hi to remind someone you are thinking of them.
- If you are working from home and would like a chance to join in the regular weekly bible study Thursday at 2 pm, you are welcome to join us virtually. Along with all who regularly attend this gathering, we can support each other more by being together. There are two options for this: video chat on WebEx, or call in by phone. Contact the office for instructions.
- In these troubling times, the church does continue to accrue it's regular expenses, and so I invite you to continue to think about how we can give our gifts of time, talent **and** treasure. If you regularly write a check when you attend, this is a good time to find your way into the online system of giving. Grab your checkbook and click the link below to get to the Give+ page on our website to make your contributions. For more information on how to access Give+, check out the how to guide. You can set up for regular payments, or just do it this once. If you are struggling, please contact the Gift Team Board or Pastor Beth to help walk you through it. If you are set up on ACH, this will continue to be taken out on the schedule you have set up. Please let us know if you are having trouble. And thank you for helping to continue to support the work we are doing and the change we can make in the world together
 - Give+ online giving: <https://www.hummelstownucc.org/give.html>
 - Information on how to set it up: [Click here](#).
 - Give is now located under Worship

In this time of fear, share the heart of who we are with the world, that the God we worship, and the life we celebrate is centered on love. God is present with us even when we are lonely. So I invite you to find the ways that will calm your own anxieties, and find your center there. We must resist the urge to contribute

to the xenophobia that has been sparked by the fear of this virus, and the anger of isolation. Speak up when you can to share a vision of unity with those who would sow divisiveness.

If you need a way to center yourself, you can even do it while contributing to health, by washing your hands with prayer on your mind. As we wash our hands, pick a favorite hymn, doxology, prayer, or scripture to sing or say (once or twice). Let's join in a spiritual practice to relieve some anxiety. The verse that pops up for me right now is, "I look to the hills, from where does my help come, it comes from God."

May you feel the presence and peace of love as we move into uncertainty and walk with one another in grace.

Blessings,

Pastor Beth Rogers

For more information about the Coronavirus and how to keep safe visit:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx>