



HEARTLAND CONFERENCE

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
N. KY • OH • WV

March 12, 2020

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 DeWine's 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 this 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 and trust that the God of resurrection will always walk with us through time of crucifixion and transform it into resurrection and new life.
- Second, make communal decision on how to proceed. Be attentive to safeguards of 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, 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,

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