



Spirit News

April 15, 2020

United Church of Christ of Seneca Valley
An Open and Affirming Congregation
13421 Clopper Road, Germantown, MD
Phone: (301) 540-3449
Email: UCCSV@verizon.net
Website: UCCSenecaValley.org

Prayer Requests

- Prayer for comfort for the family of Soren Wysockey-Johnson. Soren died tragically and suddenly on April 4. His father, Doug Wysockey-Johnson led the Crossing the River retreat at UCCSV last fall (Suzanne Schmidt and Dan Davis).
- Ongoing Prayer to grant our leaders wisdom and compassion to address the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Ongoing Prayer for inspiration and motivation in Dave's job search; healing for Shelly's knee (recent fall) and family health concerns (Shelly Moore).
- Ongoing Prayer for Alexis Symanski who is home and recovering beautifully from her massive surgery. Praise God for answered prayers (Suzanne Schmidt and Dan Davis).
- Ongoing Prayer for Maggie's Dad. Continue to pray for my Dad who is recuperating well after his fall (Maggie).
- Ongoing Prayer for Dawn Oler, our dear friend, who is having surgery to remove a tumor. We pray it is benign and her recovery is easy (Terri & Dee Dee).
- Ongoing Prayer for Cheryl's grandmother who is in a coma; pray for Ben who is battling stomach cancer (Maggie).

Ongoing Prayer Requests: Please notify Nita at uccsv@verizon.net should you wish to change your ongoing requests. Please note that ongoing prayer requests will be removed after one month. Feel free to resubmit your ongoing prayer requests.

Important Information from Pastor Holly

As always we ask you to let us know if you need help or get ill. If you end up at the hospital for any reason and you do not have your phone on you or don't want to have to tell other members of your family to call, you can always ask the hospital chaplain to get a hold of me and they will look up my number and contact me. The best thing we can do for each other during this difficult time is to be there for one another and to support each other the best we can. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you need anything. My cell phone number is 202-247-8592.

Worship Planning Help Needed TONIGHT on Zoom

You can be a part of our Worship Planning Team (not a long term commitment, just a group of people willing to think about worship planning and creative ways we can be a community together). Whoever would like to help me plan worship for the month of May is welcome to join me for a Zoom meeting this Wednesday, April 15th at 7pm. I have a worship series in mind and I'll be asking you to help me pick scripture stories and themes and brainstorm with me ideas for how to bring creative ideas into worship and help people connect with the church community from home.

Topic: Worship Planning May 2020
Time: Apr 15, 2020 07:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/98738636105?pwd=bG1RaDhreE4zcGhaRnhhVFR4SDY2UT09>

Meeting ID: 987 3863 6105

Password: 20874

Dial by your location

+1 646 558 8656 US (New York)

Meeting ID: 987 3863 6105

Password: 20874

Find your local number:

<https://zoom.us/j/aez3F7gr5H>

This Sunday at UCCSV

It's Holy Humor Sunday on Zoom this week and the Rev. Suzanne Adele Schmidt is leading us in this special service. When the subject of Holy Humor Sunday was discussed among some UCCSV folks who were planning worship, they all said, "We could use a light touch, some laughter right about now. We need to continue the Easter joy!" So this Sunday we'll tell and hear some jokes, we'll enjoy funny and uplifting music, and we will find comfort and joy in each other's presence. Wear colorful clothes or funny outfits (or maybe even your pjs!) and join us for worship this Sunday at 10am. Don't forget to bring a candle!

Topic: Sunday Worship 4/19/20

Time: Apr 19, 2020 09:30 AM Pacific Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/94158397302?pwd=VlVXQzFzYkpZTDVEUm1TZHFRTmpSZz09>

Meeting ID: 941 5839 7302

Password: 20874

Dial by your location

+1 646 558 8656 US (New York)

Meeting ID: 941 5839 7302

Password: 20874

Find your local number:

<https://zoom.us/j/aez3F7gr5H>

Worship in April and May

April 19 - Holy Humor Sunday led by Rev.

Suzanne Adele Schmidt

April 26 - Earth Day with Lois Sumser giving the Reflection

May's Worship Series - Unraveled: Seeking God When Our Plans Fall Apart. More details to come next week

Scam Emails Saying They are From Pastor Holly

This past week several of you texted me asking if I had emailed you asking you to contact me right away. If you looked closer at the email you might have seen that it was not from my email (HollyRJackson@gmail.com) but just a made up gmail account. It also did not sound like something I'd say, especially the sign off ("God Bless, Rev. Holly R. Jackson"). Luckily the scam artists don't know I'm never that formal unless I'm talking to powers and principalities outside the church.

I am guessing that if anyone did reply to this email they'd find that "Rev. Holly R. Jackson" was asking for money and not just to the church paypal fund or mailed to the church but for you to give them the numbers off the back of a gift card (which you should NEVER DO). I know I have said this before but I will NEVER ask you for money this way. If you at all suspect a communication from me is not legitimate please text me, as the people did this morning, or call me or email me at this email address to check.

I have not been hacked. These emails are not coming from my email account. I have no idea how they find out that your email is connected to me and therefore use my name fraudulently. I guess there are data mining programs out there that can find all kinds of connections. Scams are everywhere, especially right now so please

be on the lookout for any scam that looks to separate you from your money. If it doesn't sound legitimate it probably isn't.

Extra Stimulus Money?

Maybe as you receive your government stimulus checks you will find that you don't need all those funds and you will be looking to donate them to people who do. If you are looking for ideas on where to donate here are some suggestions:

1. While we have yet to get significant requests for financial help from our within our congregation you might **consider donating to our Community Assistance Fund** for future requests. Whatever funds we don't use for helping members or friends of our congregation we will donate to the Upper Montgomery Assistance Network.

<http://www.uccsenecavalley.org/donate>

2. As a church we regularly partner with and donate to four different local charity organizations that can always use more donations.

Upper Montgomery Assistance Network

(UMAN - prevents homelessness and utility shut-off) <http://uman-mc.org/>

Interfaith Works (helps homeless and those in poverty) <https://www.iworksmc.org/>

Germantown Help (food pantry)

<https://germantownhelp.org/>

WUMCO Help (food and other assistance)

<http://www.wumcohelp.org/>

3. Immigrants are especially hard hit during this pandemic because they are often ineligible for government assistance. **Consider donating to the Congregational Action Network's mutual aid campaign.** 100% of donations will go directly to immigrant families in faith

communities across the DMV who have lost their income due to COVID-19 and don't qualify for local, state, or federal support. This is a local group that several metro area UCC churches are working with.

<https://cancovidfund.causevox.com/>

4. If you haven't already donated to our Medical Debt Buyback efforts please consider doing so. Even just a small donation goes a long way. We are continuing to collect funds through the end of April. <http://www.uccsenecavalley.org/donate>

Passwords and Zoom Security

Please note a password is now necessary to join a Zoom meeting due to security issues and "Zoombombing." (Where people are deliberately entering meetings with the intention to disrupt whatever is happening with vulgar language and images.) The church's password for all meetings will be our zip code 20874. We also have our tech support and assigned Deacons doing in-meeting "security" so that if someone attempts to disrupt our worship we will remove them as swiftly as possible. We thank you for continuing to adapt with us as changes are needed.

Giving to UCCSV

It is crucial for you to continue giving to the church even as we are not gathering together in person. Your church staff is still working hard and needs to be paid and we still have utility and supplies bills coming in. So if you can continue to give please do so in one of the following ways:

1. Mail your offering check to the church. We have people coming in to the church at least once a week to gather these.

2. Set up online bill pay to the church through your bank. Yes, they will still mail the church a check but at least you didn't have to write the

check yourself! This is also usually a free option.

3. Use Paypal through our website. Use the general fund for your regular pledge. You can also give here to special funds we have set up. Please consider covering the processing fees so that more of your donation goes to the church. <http://www.uccsenecavalley.org/donate>

Thank you!

Sunday Volunteers Still Needed

Even though we are worshiping online Sunday volunteers are still needed. I am looking for greeters whose job will be to come on the Zoom call at 9:30am when the "building opens" and greet everyone as they come in verbally and by chat. I also need liturgists who will help me to lead the worship so I am not the only face and voice people are experiencing on Sunday mornings. You must be comfortable with Zoom in order to do these jobs. Please email me at HollyRJackson@gmail.com to volunteer.

Share Your Gifts and Talents in Worship

We're looking for you to be a part of our Zoom worship experience. If you have art work to share please share pictures with us so we can use it on our powerpoint. If you play music or sing Stefan will be coordinating having people take videos of themselves and then we'll use those for offertory music or preludes or postludes. Share your talent with us and enhance our worship experience. For information send pictures or videos or questions to HollyRJackson@gmail.com.



The Dilemma

In the past forty years, medical costs have doubled, insurance copays and deductibles have spiked, and bankruptcy rates have quadrupled, creating an avalanche of destructive medical debt.

The Burden

Forty-three million Americans owe about \$75 billion in past-due medical debt. Medical debt contributes to more than 60% of all bankruptcies and three-quarters of all individuals in medical bankruptcy *had health insurance coverage*. Lives, households, and dreams are sinking under loads of medical debt.

The Impact

Medical debt restricts individual's freedom with garnished wages and poor credit. A low credit score can deny someone a loan, an apartment, or even a job. The financial effects of one trip to the hospital can hold someone back their entire life, keeping them from ever reaching their full potential.

The Challenge

A dozen United Church of Christ congregations and institutions in Washington, DC and the surrounding counties have banded together in an effort to erase \$2 million or more in medical debt in the area in and around the District.

The Process

We are working with the nonprofit organization, RIP Medical Debt, which locates, buys, and forgives medical debt of individuals in the community who are below twice the federal poverty line, have debts greater than their assets, or have debts greater than 5% of their annual income. Prior to RIP's purchase, these bills have passed through several collection agencies and have been pursued for months or years. RIP offers to purchase these accounts at their present industry market value of pennies on the dollar.

Then the debt is simply forgiven. Debt relief recipients are sent a letter informing them that their medical debt has been bought by a third party and erased with no strings attached. They owe nothing on the debt and face no tax penalty.

How you can help

The United Church of Christ of Seneca Valley is collecting donations during March and April to help reach the combined goal of raising \$25,000 in the local area. Your donations, when combined with others, will enable the purchase of debt in bundled portfolios, millions of dollars at a time at a fraction of the original cost. A donation equal to the cost of a movie ticket can help relief over a thousand dollars of medical debt for a needy individual or family.

Matching gifts

Every donation from the congregation will be matched by an equal allocation from the UCCSV Social Action Fund. **This enables every dollar of your gift to buy back over \$200 in medical debt!**