



Spirit News

July 22, 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

- Prayers for the life of KEVAN (Miriam Lineberger).
- Prayers for the Lineberger Family, so good to see you today! (Joyce Miller).
- Thanks for successful surgery for my brother in law Ed (Susan Percy).
- Happy birthday to Brian and Ruel (Russell).
- Prayers for our daughter Marlene, who just lost her job. We pray that she will find something soon (Sabine Cox).
- Prayers for continued healing for Jeanne, Carol and Deborah (Joyce Miller).
- Prayers for Laura and her family as they walk with God and remember their son and brother fondly. May they know the deep peace and comfort of Christ (Suzanne Schmidt).
- For all those working to create spaces of sanity in the confused and confusing situation surrounding us (Patrick Jackson).
- Prayers for our teachers who are using all their talents to plan and bring about a new school year (Spring).
- Ongoing Prayer to grant our leaders wisdom and compassion to address the Covid-19 pandemic.

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.

This Sunday at UCCSV

Though of course we love to go on vacations to wonderful places, many times we take vacations to go visit family and friends, or we go on vacations with family and friends. So this Sunday as we continue our series on Virtual Vacations

with God we're focusing on what it means to spend your vacation time with friends and family and all the different emotions you feel on those vacations. Send pictures of your vacations with family and friends to HollyRJackson@gmail.com and we'll include them in the Prelude and Meditative Music slideshow.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84470757726?pwd=VUhkWDZacGZBUFBwYWISU3QxN3dlUT09>

Meeting ID: 844 7075 7726

Passcode: 20874

Dial by your location

+1 301 715 8592 US (Germantown)

Meeting ID: 844 7075 7726

Passcode: 20874

Find your local number:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/kcm87sP9zS>

Pastor Holly Away from July 27th - August 9th

Holly will be away on vacation and study leave for two weeks starting Monday, July 27th through Sunday, August 9th. She will return to UCCSV on Monday, August 10th. If you email her during that time she will get back to you during the week of the 9th. If you have a pastoral emergency during the time she is away you are invited to contact your Deacon (if you don't know who your assigned Deacon is please contact John Bartkowiak, The Chair of Deacons) or Rev. Bonnie Scott, (Pastor of Trinity UMC, one of our partner churches) who is providing emergency pastoral care coverage, at 301-540-4300 or revbonnie@trinity-germantown.org.

Contribution Statements

Nita will be sending out contribution statements. Please go over these carefully and make sure that all checks you have written to the church are included. If any check is missing please let Nita know. It will help if you give her the date, amount, and check number.

Thanks, Russell

When Will The Church Gather Again in Person: A Pastoral Letter

As Montgomery County has moved to Phase 2 of reopening maybe you've been wondering, **"When is UCC Seneca Valley going to reopen?"** While I completely understand why you might be asking that, I would argue that you're asking the wrong question. **UCC Seneca Valley doesn't need to reopen because we've never been closed. Our church building has been closed. But the church isn't a building. We are the church.** It is our people and our community that are the heart of UCC Seneca Valley and we have continued to do God's work even as God continues to call us to ministry.

When the pandemic hit our church community moved online to Zoom worship without even missing a Sunday. During the last several months church meetings have been held online, Church Council has met and made leadership decisions online, there have been fellowship times, game nights, poetry groups, bible studies, and mindfulness groups, all online. We even did our Juneteenth Protest and Remembrance online when we were rained out. We've dropped off packages to UCCSV's children and youth, had a graduate parade, held a Pop-up Pride Event, painted the church building, and weeded flower beds on our grounds. The Deacons have

made phone calls or sent emails or cards to UCCSV members and friends, people have participated in various ways in Zoom worship, and we even get to hear the voices of our choir singing hymns and responses each week. We collected thousands of dollars for medical debt in April and May and many of us have kept up our food giving to Germantown Help. I have met with people for pastoral matters online and by phone and even in person, but physically distanced, in our church prayer garden. **The work of our church has never stopped!**

The more relevant question then really is, "When will we gather again for in-person events, especially inside our building?" This is a more difficult question to answer. As we have watched portions of our country re-open, oftentimes without taking the necessary precautions, cases of COVID-19 have skyrocketed. Sadly, there have been many cases where in-person worship services have resumed in various churches, only to end up spreading the virus in the local community. This is a cautionary tale for us. Scientists tell us that gathering in an enclosed room with a large number of people for a prolonged amount of time is one of the most high-risk things we can do right now. **Therefore, in-person, in-building worship is one of the most high-risk things we can do right now, no matter how many precautions we may take.**

The health and safety of this congregation is vitally important to me and to your church leadership. A small Task Force, a subset of the Church Council, has put together a set of guidelines for us to use as we consider how to regather in person safely as a congregation. The Task Force's recommendations are based entirely on public health indicators and with guidance from our regional denominational body, the Central Atlantic Conference. **The guidelines are attached to this letter.**

The Task Force has recommended, and the Church Council voted to affirm, that we will move towards gathering for in-person in-building worship services **only when there is a consistent record of no new cases and no new deaths in our county.** Montgomery County has been very transparent and trustworthy with their data and provides daily updates on their Coronavirus Dashboard website. Church leadership continues to monitor those numbers and make decisions based on the trends they show. Presently Montgomery County is still recording between 50-100 new cases a day and 2-3 deaths per day. While this is a significant decrease from earlier numbers, **Coronavirus remains an active threat in our area and therefore remains a significant threat to our congregation and wider community. Holding in person, in building worship right now is simply more of a risk than we are willing to take as your church leaders.** Our most recent church survey also affirmed that the majority of you as a congregation are not willing to take such a risk.

But there are ways to minimize that risk as we consider how we move forward in ministry over the next few months. **Scientists tell us that meeting in smaller numbers outside, physically distant, and while wearing masks is the safest possible way for us to gather in person right now.** So, before we gather again in our building, we will start with meeting outside. This has already begun at events like Pop-up Pride and the July 4th picnic. And it will continue with moving towards possible outside evening worship services in August and September. Small groups or committees may also meet outside on church grounds or in other outdoor spaces (using recommended safety guidelines) as needed and as appropriate.

In the meantime, the reality is that much of our ministry in the next few months, if not longer, will remain online. That means we need to continue to work to reach out to one another and church leadership will continue to create online opportunities for you to learn, grow spiritually, connect, and feel a little less alone. And even when we do return to in-person in-building worship, it is clear that the need for livestreaming our service or maintaining some kind of digital ministry will only grow.

While I am generally an optimistic person, there is real grief in knowing that we will not be returning to anything that even begins to feel like “normal” church anytime soon, if ever. We must hold space for this grief even as we do what we can to make the best out of a tremendously difficult situation. It’s okay to get frustrated or angry or simply be sad. I have done all of those things. **But I am also so proud of how we as a faith community have stuck together, volunteered, participated, and just generally worked hard to be the church. Thank you for your commitment and your support and your care.**

One day we will look back at this year and know all that it took to survive and do our best to thrive in this pandemic. I want us to be able to say, “With the help of God and our compassion and commitment, we became an ever more inclusive and connected community. Using art and worship and our gifts we found a way to meet God and each other in new ways. In the end, regardless of how hard it was, we truly served our community and advocated for justice.” **In these next months, no matter how or where we gather, let us remember that we are the church, right here and right now. And the world still desperately needs, maybe more than ever, to hear the good news of the Gospel and that all are beloved of God. We can do this UCCSV, together.**

As always, please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns or simply need to talk.

Peace, Holly

Upcoming Sunday Worship Themes– Virtual Vacations with God

7/26/20 – Visiting Family

8/2/20 – The El Camino (Places We'd Love to Go but Probably Won't) led by Rev. Suzanne Schmidt

8/9/20 – Visiting Different Churches

8/16/20 – The Forest

8/23/20 – Cities/Museums/Famous Landmarks

8/30/20 – Traveling for Events (Weddings, Celebrations, Family reunions, etc.)

9/6/20 – The Lake

Deacon List Update - Your Help Needed!

As many of you know at UCCSV we assign all members, and many regular visitors and friends, an individual Deacon. This Deacon will be able to contact you and keep you abreast of any major issues at church. In addition during this pandemic the Deacons have been instrumental in keeping our community connected and cared for. You can share pastoral concerns with your Deacon and also ask them any questions you might have about church. In order to make contact between you and your Deacon as easy as possible we ask that you answer a few simple questions. All your answers will be kept in confidence. **We especially need this feedback from people new to our congregation or if your contact information has recently changed.** If you are not sure who your Deacon is that's a good indication that we need you to fill out this form! Please fill out the form below at

your earliest convenience so that we can update our Deacon Lists as soon as possible.

<https://forms.gle/xfqf2DgmWqEK5x8G8>

Equal Exchange Coffee and Chocolate for Sale at Church

Bethany Fuss will be selling Equal Exchange coffee & chocolate outside the church on Sunday, July 26 from 4-6 pm.

Zoom Worship Volunteer Opportunities

If you would like to help lead our Zoom worship experience there are ways you can help. We still need a "Greeter" and a "Liturgist" every Sunday. Greeters will welcome people as they come into the meeting before worship by voice or by chat and help by supplying important web links in the chat box. Liturgists will lead the service with Holly. We also welcome musical video offerings of instruments or voice that we can use during worship. In addition, we welcome pictures of our congregation during this time apart

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/4090849a4a722a02-uccsv>



July Birthdays

Terri Molaski	7/3
Deb Anderson	7/9
Laura Yeany	7/9
Joan Bomar	7/10
Patrick Jackson	7/10
Carol Brandt	7/13
John Bartkowiak	7/14
Dee Dee Molaski	7/14
Tim Fuss	7/17
George Benskin V	7/19
Jim Hall	7/19
Shelly Moore	7/20

Colin Pelkey	7/22
Eli Sotak	7/24
Rod Dunlap	7/28
Deborah Barnes	7/30
Helen Walty	7/30

New P.O. Box

We now have a PO box for mailing all your pledges and contributions. As soon as possible, please start mailing your checks to this new address.

The address is
United Church of Christ of Seneca Valley
PO Box 803
Germantown, MD **20875**

Note that the zip is now different even though it is the 20874 Post Office. It would be helpful if everyone would spell out the complete church name and not use UCCSV. Maybe this would help the Post Office in directing the mail to the correct address. Any questions, please contact Russell Shelley, Treasurer (russellshelley92@gmail.com).

Please note that all other correspondence can still be mailed to our Clopper Road address.

Mindfulness - Calm Your Heart and Mind

Mindfulness sessions lead by Ruel Billones will be held on Mondays from 7-8 via Zoom. Below is the Zoom log-in information. The same login will be used for each session. Please check out the Signup Genius email or contact Beth Lauriat at balauriat@aol.com for more information.

Topic: Mindfulness

Time: This is a recurring meeting Meet anytime
Join Zoom Meeting
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84478622520?pwd=cUdmWXptYmRmK0h6UmE0WWd5Nkl3Zz09>

Meeting ID: 844 7862 2520

Password: 533492

One tap mobile

+13017158592,,84478622520#,,1#,533492# US (Germantown)

+13126266799,,84478622520#,,1#,533492# US (Chicago)

Dial by your location

+1 301 715 8592 US (Germantown)

+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)

+1 646 876 9923 US (New York)

+1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)

+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)

+1 408 638 0968 US (San Jose)

+1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)

Meeting ID: 844 7862 2520

Password: 533492

Find your local

number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/kw7K7XJcM>

Recordings of Zoom Worship Services

If ever you miss a Zoom worship service and you want to go back and watch a recording for that week, you can always find our past services on our website here:

https://www.uccsenecavalley.org/watch_us_online

This is also a great place to send neighbors, friends and family who may want to check us out but might be nervous about joining us on Zoom for the first time. It's a great way to see what Sunday mornings online are like and they can fast forward through anything they don't want to watch! ;-)

News for UCCSV Families with Children

While doing Christian Education online is no easy feat, UCCSV is offering various ways for families and children to continue to connect with God and with their church this summer. Ms. Uriah, our Nursery Care Provider has been making videos for the youngest of UCCSV's community. Find her latest video showing the children how to make a bird feeder for our feather neighbors here:

https://www.uccsenecavalley.org/ms_uriah_makes_a_bird_feeder

On our Watch Us Online page you can also find a video from Ms. Uriah about creating a cool rainbow craft/science experiment.

In addition, UCCSV children and some youth got "Church to Go" bags in the last couple of weeks. These bags contained various things for kids to use at home and with their families including a cross, playdoh, bubbles, a family devotional for summer, M&M Prayers, bubbles, and more. Ingredients for a good summer with God!