



Spirit News

March 19, 2020

United Church of Christ of Seneca Valley
An Open and Affirming Congregation
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Email: UCCSV@verizon.net
Website: UCCSenecaValley.org

Prayer Requests

- 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. Recovering from a chemo during January and a radical mastectomy on 2.17.20. Alexis is a member of the Schmidt family (Suzanne Schmidt).
- 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.

This Sunday at UCCSV

We've gone online with Zoom worship! We continue, even virtually, to observe Lent and explore our series "Looking for Love in All the Wrong Places." This week's lectionary scripture is Psalm 23 and we'll spend time looking for love that is healthy and whole by looking for the shepherds in our lives. Because we're using

Zoom for worship, you don't just get to see and hear me, but we all get to see and hear each other. We get to have prayer requests through our chat and we pass the peace together and say the Lord's Prayer with a variety of voices. Zoom worship is real worship so we encourage you to experiment with it and find what works for you. This week I especially encourage you to have a candle, real or electric, near you when you sit down to your computer. We will light them together during the Prelude and it will remind us of how we are connected, even as we are all in our own houses. The "building" will be open at 9:30 for people to gather before service. Service will begin at 10am with a prelude and announcements. Please feel free to join us anytime during worship. Don't worry if you are "late". Also after worship there will be opportunities to stay online and fellowship with each other.

This is the call in information:

Topic: Sunday Worship 3/22/20

Time: Mar 22, 2020 09:30 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/163742475>

Meeting ID: 163 742 475

One tap mobile

+16465588656,,163742475# US

Dial by your location

+1 646 558 8656 US

Meeting ID: 163 742 475

Last Week's Worship Service

Last week's worship was our first attempt with Zoom and while it was not perfect, it was a great start as we deal with our new reality for the next several weeks (at least). If you did not

get on our Zoom call but you want to see what worship looked and sounded like you can watch the recording here:

https://zoom.us/rec/share/6pBMNZiz2XpJebPUtHj2Vqc8EN2_eaa8hiQc-aYOnRsZTgW-4ALqjk_HPB32-iF?startTime=1584281041000

We will continue to record worship each week and share those recordings with you.

If You're Struggling with Zoom Technically

Please note that you can always just call in to a zoom meeting using your phone if you prefer to do it that way. Some people on Sunday also found they could see video but not hear. In that case you may want to set up the video and then also use your phone to connect with the audio. If you need technical help please contact Holly at HollyRJackson@gmail.com or call me on my cel phone at 202-247-8592 and I will try to help. Also there are many resources for how to use Zoom on their website, including video tutorials. We're all on a learning curve together!

Check out: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/206618765-Zoom-Video-Tutorials>
In particular watch videos on How to Connect to a meeting:

https://www.youtube.com/embed/vFhAEoCF7jg?rel=0&autoplay=1&cc_load_policy=1

How to configure your audio and video:

https://www.youtube.com/embed/HqncX7RE0wM?rel=0&autoplay=1&cc_load_policy=1

This is a wonderful super easy visual guide for Zoom:

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b4ccb837e3c3aff68a91faa/t/5ba66614e79c705ac397dade/1537631766152/SUPER-EASY-GUIDE.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0AKVEJJVUIY4RsXbXYPfmejKLaO-7lluAyocysYcq-z0THaP0_BW-qGWI

How Long Will Things Be Closed?

There is no clear timetable for this right now. Originally we said worship would be closed through March with the hope of having in person worship on Palm Sunday, April 5th. Now however the CDC is recommending groups of more than 50 people not gather together for 8 weeks. That is mid-May. What's clear at this point is that we have no idea how the next several weeks or even months are going to go. The Church Council will meet again (by Zoom) on April 20th and at that time we will make a decision about the Calendar from there depending on the advice and mandated closures from local health departments and the Maryland and Montgomery County Government. This is a situation in constant flux.

What we can tell you is that we are doing all we can to maintain our community, help one another, spread the good news of the gospel, and worship God during this difficult time. And yes, that means we are trying to figure out creative ways to celebrate Palm Sunday, Holy Week, and Easter online. Our Deacons are reaching out and making sure everyone is okay. We're meeting virtually whenever we can. Pastor Holly is available by email, phone, text, or Zoom. We'll be sending out resources for you to do with your kids or by yourself at home to help you maintain a sense of peace and stay connected to God even as we are all distanced one from another.

I don't know what life will look like in two weeks or two months. But I do know that no matter what we will continue to be a community that includes all, deepens our connections to God and to each other, gives us ways to express ourselves, advocates for justice, and serves others. I also know that the next time we get together in person for worship and we can hug

and sing together and eat together and be physically with one another will be a glorious day of resurrection. I look forward to that end to this prolonged time in the wilderness.

What Can I Do?

As our lives have changed drastically these last weeks it might seem like we have no control over things right now. But that's not true. There are lots of things we can do that can make a huge difference. Here are our top 10 (and please send additional ideas in if you have any):

1. Pray for each other. This is so important right now. Pray and stay connected to the holy. Use a printed prayer, make up your own, journal as a form of prayer, color your prayers, pray the news, make a list of friends, family and church people and go down that list. There are so many ways to pray. Just pick one and do it.
2. Call someone. Call someone each day. Make an effort to talk to others. Remind people of your love and care.
3. Write letters and cards. It's time to go old school. Write letters and cards to those we are not seeing regularly. Send cards to nursing home. Send cards of thanks to hospitals and first responders. Give people a little joy through the mail. (Church friends would love to get mail!)
4. Ask if you need help. If you don't feel safe going to the store or going out and you need help, please ask for it. Call your Deacon or Pastor Holly. Ask a neighbor. Ask a family member who is in a less at risk group. Do not treat this lightly. Ask for help. There are lots of us willing to support you.
5. Offer help. If you are in a low risk group or you feel comfortable helping others, offer your services. Agree to go to the store or run errands. Cook for people. Send them flowers. Read online to their kids. Offer a skill or talent to the world. Be generous with your time.

6. Support small and local businesses. So many small and local businesses are in economic trouble right now. If you know of restaurants that are open order take out if you feel comfortable doing so. If not, buy a gift card to use later. Make a purchase online from a local store or from your favorite online small business or artist. Have a favorite Etsy store? Buy something if you have the resources to do so. You get the idea.

7. Stay home. It may seem like a thing we are already having to do and not something we choose for ourselves, but by staying home you are doing your part to stop the community spread of this virus. Stay home if you can and if you must go to work, please take every precaution and wash your hands frequently. Practice social distancing when you go out and stay at least 6 feet away from others outside your household.

8. Advocate for justice. This pandemic has shown us the absolute cracks in our system. Inequality will make the effects of this virus so much worse for those who are most vulnerable in our society including the sick, immigrants, victims of abuse and domestic violence, the poor, etc. Spend some time educating yourself about the issues and then call or write letters to your lawmakers and other community leaders advocating for laws and systems that will help the most vulnerable get through this situation.

9. Give to organizations that need your help (including your church). Even though the world seems to be on lockdown non-profits are still doing their work and having to pay their workers. Here at church we are working to continue to pay the salaries and paychecks of our staff and though our building may be closed our bills for utilities and supplies will still pile up. In addition, organizations that seek to help to help the hungry and homeless are seeing increased demands for help and decreased numbers of donations and volunteers. Please consider giving to Germantown Help during this

time. We are not collecting donations of food at church, so take the money you would normally spend at the grocery store and donate it here: <https://germantownhelp.org/support-us>. Or give to WUMCO:

<http://www.wumcohelp.org/Donate.html> or other organizations you hold dear.

10. Stay connected to church. Come to Zoom worship or Zoom Lenten Soupers or another virtual church meeting or gathering. You aren't in this alone. We will help get each other through this but that's only possible if we stick together. Make staying connected with your church community a priority in this time. The positives are that your commute to church is now much shorter, it doesn't matter what you wear, and you can even put Pastor Holly on mute if the sermon goes on too long. ;-)

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!

Lenten Soupers on Zoom

You are invited to join in a virtual Lenten Souper starting at 6:30pm on Wednesday, March 25th. Feel free to bring your dinner (doesn't have to be soup) and sit and eat with us in front of your computer (or with your phone) and socialize. Then at 7:15pm we will drop out of the meeting to watch the TED talk separately. We will return to the call at 7:30pm for our discussion. If there are a large number of us we can actually break into small groups inside Zoom for awhile and then return to the larger group to discuss. You can come for some or all of this call, as works for you.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/628900491>

Meeting ID: 628 900 491

One tap mobile

+16465588656,,628900491# US (New York)

Dial by your location

+1 646 558 8656 US (New York)

Meeting ID: 628 900 491

Here is the link to the TED talk we will be discussing:

https://www.ted.com/talks/susan_david_the_gift_and_power_of_emotional_courage

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.

Flat Jesus Returns Early

During summer, when many of use don't see each other as often we usually take pictures of our adventures with Flat Jesus to share them together when we return. If you have a Flat Jesus laying around your house somewhere we've decided to resurrect him early this year! Pull out Flat Jesus and take pictures of him home with you in this "new normal". Flat Jesus doesn't need to social distance from you! Flat Jesus can come to work with you or do online school with you. Flat Jesus can go on walks with you around the neighborhood. Share pictures of Flat Jesus on our facebook UCCSV group page or send them to Holly at HollyRJackson@gmail.com. Let's brighten each other's day and remember that Jesus continues to be with us no matter what! If you need an new Flat Jesus we have attached one to this newsletter.



Prayer Garden



The Lenten Roses are now in bloom in UCCSV's prayer garden, just in time for Lent. Take a moment and take your coffee up to the garden, sit on our lovely bench and enjoy this quiet spot.

Women's Retreat Cancellation

Dear friends, out of an abundance of caution and an inability to determine the trajectory or time line of the Coronavirus, it has been decided that the Retreat should be postponed. It definitely will be rescheduled when we see a clear future for it. We have much of the frame work in place so it will be easy to pick up from where we left off. It is understood that a new date may not fit into your plans so we will start the registration over.

Until then stay healthy and calm,

Co-Chairs,

Susan Percy & Pam Van Prooyen

You Are Welcome Here!

Perhaps you've noticed the relatively new welcome sign in the foyer as you enter the church. This collage was made last year at the Women's Retreat as part of a craft project and gift to the church. Many hands went into cutting all the images and adhering to the surface. Hope you like it and that you always know that you are welcome at UCCSV!



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 in 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!**