

Dear Bethel, UCC Congregation,

On the following page is a letter that came from the Living Water Association /Heartland Conference and other leaders in the United Church of Christ in Ohio. I am including this to help you understand the difficult decisions that we were faced with today.

Thursday evening, I was asked if we would have Worship this Sunday in light of the declared state of emergency in Ohio due to the emerging pandemic. My immediate answer was that I thought we could have church services because we are a small congregation and we can come together and worship without getting others sick.

Today I received the attached letter, and I sent it to the General Council of Bethel UCC and asked them what we should do. After an exchange of messages with all seven members of the Council, we have decided that for the safety of our congregation, Sunday Worship will be suspended through the end of March. With that in mind, we have come up with alternate plans to keep in touch and remain connected with all of you during this difficult time.

We are currently working on a plan to live stream a message for you to watch online on Sunday morning through our Facebook page. I know that not all of you have access to Facebook, or even the internet but this is one way we can stay in contact and worship with each other until the escalation of Coronavirus has lessened.

We are working on several other communication methods which will be announced during our live broadcast on Sunday morning and it will involve all of us working together to support and pray for each other. This information will be posted on our website and Facebook page this weekend so stay tuned. <https://www.bethelbeloit.org>

https://www.facebook.com/Bethel-United-Church-of-Christ-116097071751075/?ref=aymt_homepage_panel&eid=ARCwB1FAMUUd_wcWB6U9cLigVJQ48TiXbUb-bhP1qyKqHh2XtEhYi2NOT0L-8T0ganJWVqkwZmqWMIrA

One last reminder, tithes and offerings are essential to the life and ministry of the Bethel United Church of Christ, and we ask that you continue your support even though we are not physically together. Checks can be mailed to the church or sent through your online banking programs.

We are praying for all of you, we know that several people in our congregation are at great risk if they are exposed to this illness and we do not take that lightly. Please continue to communicate with us by phone, text and email, we want to hear from you!

Peace and Love,

Pastor Allen Kahler

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 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,

Rev. Dan Busch

Rev. Nayiri Karjian

Rev. Patricia Battle

Rev. Carl Robinson

Rev. David Long-Higgins