



The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the South Jersey Shore

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Beloved Community,

Our community, our nation, and our world are currently challenged by the pandemic of illness known as the COVID-19 strand of the coronavirus. Our world has been through similar catastrophes and has survived. We will survive this situation as well. Advances in medical and communication technology in the last century had greatly increased humanity's capacity for managing outbreaks like the one we are experiencing, and we will come through this.

There is good news to report as well. As a community, we care deeply about each other and our neighbors. In order to protect one another from viral exposure, we must take steps to preserve the health and well-being of our members, friends, and the larger community we serve. Details about how the coronavirus is transmitted are still not precisely defined, and so it is both wise and prudent to adjust our lives to minimize the possible opportunities for infection. This is not just about keeping ourselves safe - it is also about keeping everyone around us from infection as well.

To this end, and based upon recommendations by Rev. Dawn Fortune and Unitarian Universalist Association President Rev. Susan Frederick Gray, the board decided to suspend in-person worship at our UU Center immediately, for an initial estimated period of four weeks, ending in April, at a date to be determined by the progression of the pandemic, with a return to our regular service and programming schedule at that time.

Beginning this week, worship services will be conducted online and broadcast on ZOOM. Worship will begin at 10 a.m. Sunday morning like usual. A link to that platform will be available on the congregational website uucsjs.org and is printed on the attached information sheet. You do NOT need to have a computer to participate. ZOOM can be accessed using a regular phone like your land line at home (although NOT a rotary phone!). The information is on the attached sheet, and we have volunteers ready to help you get connected so you can participate in the services and conversations. Reach out to DRE Jess Dunn-Safonof for help.

We will also be closing the UU Center building for that same amount of time, with only one board member having access. This is to minimize the opportunity for germs to be spread via smooth surfaces or shared space, even if that space is shared at different times. Please honor this quarantine of the building. It will be wiped clean and disinfected before worship and other programming resumes.

It is vitally important that the UUCSJS and our UU Center not be a point of coronavirus transmission in south Jersey.

Signs will be posted on the building door and by the roadside directing people to visit our website to learn how to attend worship or for more information.

Rev. Dawn will host twice-weekly pastoral chat sessions via ZOOM that are open to anyone who would like to connect in community and chat about either a designated topic, or simply to see and hear one another's voices. The times of those chats will be on Wednesday evenings at 7 p.m. and on Friday afternoons at 1 p.m. All are welcome to participate in those conversations.

If you are feeling isolated or would like someone to talk to, please reach out to the Pastoral Care team, led by Tracey Catino, at traceysnaps@msn.com or by calling or texting 609-674-8721.

These are challenging times, friends. We will do a lot of learning in the coming weeks, and when we come back together again, we will be a community changed by this experience. Things are going to be tricky, but not impossible. We look forward to seeing you online in worship and during the pastoral chats and toward the time when we can again join together in community at our UU Center.

In shared ministry,

Melissa Hutchison and Rev. Dawn Fortune