

First United Church
of Christ
1017 Todds Lane
Hampton, VA 23666-1924

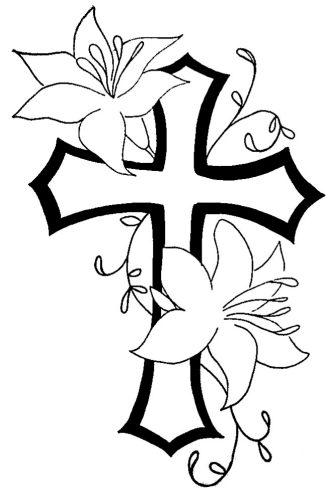
Tel: 757-826-7560

E-mail:
firstuccyo@verizon.net

Website:
www.firstucchampton.org



Like us on Facebook
First United Church of Christ
Hampton



TOGETHER **Worshipping God
Growing Spiritually
Serving Others**

Our new drive-in worship services
begin in May!
Please come join us Sundays at
10:30am in the west parking lot
(kitchen side) as we worship together
from our cars.

Together we are First UCC!

FIRST UCC HAPPENINGS



FIRST UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, HAMPTON, VA



This season of self-quarantine is abnormal to most of us. And that means the feeling of loneliness is a reality for all of us. We cannot visit retirement homes. Closed off to us now are churches and workplaces and restaurants. The sense of isolation and loneliness so common before this virus has been amplified by this quarantine. No

surprise, I've been hearing this theme resonate with many people I speak with. So, what would you say to the lonely during this season?

I heard someone use the word amplification when chatting about the presence of loneliness prior to our isolation and it's effect during our isolation. Things are amplified now that, in a sense, have always been true for some. So, maybe the first thing to say is that I'm aware that thousands of Christians live alone all the time and deal with the issue of aloneness and sometimes loneliness even when there is no coronavirus to amplify the issue. A few of these people may prefer it that way. Most of them probably can imagine situations they'd rather be in, whether marriage or friendships or memberships that just haven't come their way.

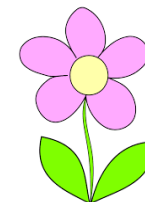
So, we're not talking about an issue here that is relevant only during coronavirus. But there is no doubt that millions of people are being thrown now into a kind of life that they have never lived before — at least not in this way.

Alone Is Not Ideal

These really are unprecedented days, and we don't know how long they're going to go, and we don't know how bad things are going to get or not. So, it's good to say in general, for the long-term issue of aloneness or loneliness or the short-term issue of loneliness during this crisis, that it's okay to believe and to feel that loneliness or aloneness is not the ideal way of life that God set up for humanity at the beginning. It's okay to believe that, however God said to Adam when he was alone in Genesis 2:18, "It is not good that the you should be alone."

But the world isn't the way it was created to be, and there are many reasons — some good, some justifiable, some bad — for why people are alone. Paul wasn't married. Jesus wasn't married. They knew lots of aloneness. Thousands of missionaries have had fruitful ministries without marriage partners, which means that even though aloneness is not ideal, God has provided grace for all kinds of situations in this fallen world that are not ideal. And loneliness is one of them. He's not unaware of it. Jesus experienced it, and there is grace for it — whether the short term of coronavirus loneliness or the long term of a life situation that involves loneliness.

(Continued on Page 2)



MAY 2020
TOGETHER

**Worshipping God
Growing Spiritually
Serving Others**



Savior in Solitude

One way that God planned grace for the lonely is by sending his Son to become a human being so that Jesus, his Son, could experience a kind of loneliness that would make him, the Bible says, a sympathetic high priest for the lonely (Hebrews 4:15). I think the Gethsemane scene the night before he died may be one of the most poignant in the Bible. Jesus takes his closest friends — Peter, James, and John — apart and he says, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me.” And going a little farther [so that means he’s now alone] he fell on his face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.” And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, “So, could you not watch with me one hour?” Matthew 26:38-40

That happened three times. They fell asleep on him. He wanted their partnership in prayer in this hour — he was a human being — and they couldn’t do it. It gets worse. When the soldiers come, it says then that they all forsook him and fled (Mark 14:50). And it gets worse yet, because the next morning, Jesus says, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46).

Mercy in Our Loneliness

Now, why so much loneliness in his suffering? Because it was all according to the Scripture. This was planned. Why? Well, among other reasons, it was so that Hebrews 4:15-16 could be in the Bible for lonely people: “We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted, or tested, as we are [perhaps with loneliness], yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

The text says “in time of need,” but you could just supply “in time of loneliness.” So, Christ experienced utter forsakenness, utter loneliness, so that we would boldly pray for grace — a special grace in time of loneliness — and would have confidence that he would give it.

Turn to Me, O Lord

Now, what might a prayer like that sound like? Well, here’s what it sounded like in the mouth of David in Psalm 25:16: “Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted.” David had a lot of crises where he was cut off from the people he needed. This is a good prayer right now for thousands of people.

Will God answer that prayer? There are good reasons to believe that he will. First because he made provisions for it while he was still here. He said, “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you” (John 14:18). The last thing he said on earth was, “Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20). In other words, he sends the Holy Spirit, which is the Spirit of Christ, and he will be with every Christian. Christian, you are not alone. I’ll say it again: Christian, you are not alone. This is absolutely wonderful. You are never alone. The most important person in the universe — mark this — is with you personally. He promised to be. He doesn’t break his word. He is.

The second reason we can expect the sweet answer to that prayer is this: “Fear not, for I am with you.” There it is. You don’t even need to go any farther in Isaiah 41:10 — even though we want to.

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For this first week I have included the music to my arrangement of “Be Thou My Vision.” I made videos and audio recordings of the 3 different recorder parts, included the music so you can read it or print it out, and recorded the piano playing all of the 3 parts so you can play along. If you are so inclined, please enjoy!

What About Singing in those Little Boxes Like I see People posting on Facebook?

What a lot of people are promoting lately is something that looks like a bunch of people all singing or playing together (in separate boxes) online, in polished and exquisitely beautiful unity. This is called a “virtual choir.” What about our church doing that with our musicians???

First, you need to understand how these things are created. As of now, there does not exist a way to sing together online in real time. This is due to time delays when using Skype, FaceTime, Zoom, etc..

So...what is involved in creating one of these “virtual choirs?” I will tell you about how the Virginia Choral Society is creating one 3 minute anthem using this concept. First the conductor video records himself conducting the song. He then sends this video to the piano player, who uses it to record an audio recording of herself playing the piano version of all the singers’ parts. She then sends her audio recording back to the conductor so that, using video/sound engineering software, the “click track” of both conductor and pianist is created. Then every member of the choir is emailed this “click track” for them to watch and listen to (with headphones) on their laptop, while recording yet another video of themselves singing their individual part on their smart phones. Then each singer uploads their own video to a Google doc to send it to the conductor. THEN, the conductor uploads each vocal video into the software to edit the audio part - lines up everyone’s rhythm, fixes wrong notes (if possible), cuts out background noise, etc. Then the audio is reconnected to the video images of all the singers. The mastering of these “virtual choirs” literally takes days of work, if not weeks. The original “virtual choir” video that started this whole craze was made by Eric Whitacre, took hundreds of hours of editing, and cost over \$100,000 to produce. You can find this amazing recording on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D7o7BrlbaDs>

So...after all that work, in the end, we will have one 3 minute long “virtual choir” video of Bruckner’s anthem, “Locus Iste.” It won’t cost us nearly as much as the first “virtual choir” cost, but it will cost us something. I know my son Chris is able to do this, but are we able to do what is needed on our end? Can it be done? Sure! Is it feasible for us to do? Hmmm....



Please take this extra time at home to update the church office with your current contact information: address, phone, email and the like. Leave a message at 826-7560, or send an email to firstuccyo@verizon.net.

Thank you!



From the Director of Music

Worship Services

As of April 22, we have explored a variety of ways to create a worship experience for our First UCC Family. We continue to learn how to make this better. For those who are on Facebook we offer weekly video worship, sometimes with one combined video, and sometimes with two separate videos. For those without Facebook, I have been emailing something I call E-Worship. This is an email with the worship bulletin, giving the spoken liturgy and music. Then I have been attaching audio MP3 files so that you can hear music I have recorded on the organ and piano for each week. This method seems to be most effective!

On Sunday, May 3, we are going to try to do Drive In Church. For this outdoor experience, I will be playing music that I recorded on our organ and piano. In order to keep this low tech, I will play it from my CD player so that you can hear it from inside your vehicles and sing along from inside your cars. The Potter's Place and Rev. Ed will be using amps and microphones for their portions of the service.

E-Rehearsals

I have started creating emails that are going out to our musicians which act as rehearsal guides. I give a rehearsal outline and instructions, with audio files to demonstrate and to play vocal parts and accompaniments. People can practice along with these as they have time. The reason for continuing to practice is three-fold: 1. To lift our spirits! 2. To keep up our musical skills and 3. To perhaps be able to sing or play some of our music together (safely inside our cars) when we have Drive In Church. So far I have done E-Rehearsals for Singing and Handbell groups.

First UCC Recorder Consort

Way back in 2005, when I first started my ministry at First UCC, I had an already-established group of recorder players who rehearsed every Thursday night. We had a variety of skill levels, from beginner to advanced. I started arranging church music for this group and we had great fun for many years. Well, it suddenly struck me (as I'm seeing so many music teachers trying to teach recorder online) that we could bring this group back in an online format.

To that end, I have created both a Facebook Group (a part of our church Facebook page), and E-Recorder Rehearsals. The Facebook Group is open to the public (unlike the First UCC Music group, which is just for our musicians). Anyone can join First UCC Recorder Consort, including family and friends, near and far, former members who have moved away, your grandchildren, ANYONE! All you need to do this is a plastic recorder (available for less than \$10 on Amazon). I have included a fingering chart so you can learn how to play the notes. Due to copyright laws, I can't post beginner exercises unless I compose them myself. That will be coming.

Fear not, for I am with you;
be not dismayed, for I am your God;
I will strengthen you, I will help you,
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.
But the first phrase is everything: Fear not, for I am with you.

Or here's the way Paul puts it in 2 Corinthians 9:8: "God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work." In other words, there is a grace — a well-timed grace — to make you fruitful in times of loneliness.

He Will Come to Us

So, the experience of loneliness is real for God's people — even God's people. Because this world is not what it was created to be yet. In its ideal form, when it was made, it fell. It is a fallen world, and our relationships are fallen, and viruses are fallen.

But God did not leave the world and its brokenness without grace — special grace for every need that his people have, including the need of loneliness. Jesus purchased that grace for sinners with his own lonely suffering. He knows our frame. He has tasted it — worse than we know. And he will not leave us as orphans. He will come to us. Whether the coronavirus isolates us or takes our life, he will not leave us alone. This is a precious and sure promise.

PS - Beloved, it is with a lump in my throat and eyes being filled with tears as I type these next words with the upmost compassion and sincerity... I miss and love each of you. I'm quietly praying for you and am eager to serve you should you as you have need. May the God of comfort continue to give you the company of Himself and His Son during this time. God bless you!

~Rev. Ed Lilley

Prayer: Taken from United States Conference of Bishops

For all who have contracted coronavirus, We pray for care and healing.
For those who are particularly vulnerable, We pray for safety and protection.
For all who experience fear or anxiety, We pray for peace of mind and spirit.
For affected families who are facing difficult decisions between food on the table or public safety, We pray for policies that recognize their plight.
For those who do not have adequate health insurance, We pray that no family will face financial burdens alone.
For those who are afraid to access care due to immigration status, We pray for recognition of the God-given dignity of all.
For our brothers and sisters around the world, We pray for shared solidarity.
For public officials and decisionmakers, We pray for wisdom and guidance.
Father, during this time may your Church be a sign of hope, comfort and love to all.
Grant peace. Grant comfort. Grant healing. Be with us, Lord.
Amen.





WAYS & MEANS: THE WAY OF TRUST

We have received other gifts of daring generosity.

When we are called to account, the question will be not how it is that we preserved the balance sheet or the bricks and mortar, but whether we emulated others' daring and doubled it, taking audacious action to preserve principle over principal.

Rev. Andrew Warner, Plymouth UCC
Christian Century, November 4, 2008

When we read of Zacchaeus seeking Jesus (Luke 19:1-10), we need to realize that it too was a polarized world. Will the reign of God take over the reign of Caesar? Zacchaeus was one of those people who lived in both worlds. Balancing an allegiance to both Rome and Jerusalem, he is like those who straddle worlds of health and ill-health or those who yearn for mercy while maintaining codes of purity.

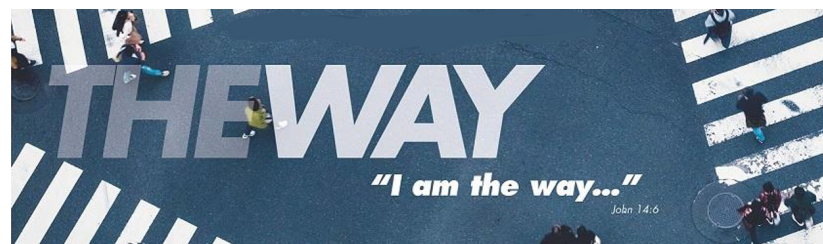
Two things often happen to out-of-place or marginalized people. One is that they stop trying to live in both worlds convinced that no new world is possible. Or, they wring all the joy out of a new world making guilt the path. Either path will wear you out.

Zacchaeus offers a different way of living in two different if not conflicting worlds. He throws caution to the wind and embraces this dual status with abandon.

Zacchaeus is up a tree trying to get a new perspective on his reality. The world as it is surrounds him, but he is being beckoned to participate in a world as it should be.

We live compromised lives. CO2 levels are changing our environment and still we drive. We need to be on the path that Zacchaeus is on. Up a tree or not - neither immobilized by fear or intimidated by guilt, living in one world yet guided by the one that is emerging.

Make your pledge today to this community of faith, but also pledge to live towards the coming reign of God and not by draining the last drop of life from this one. With Jesus, you have a place in God's household. Follow Zacchaeus down the tree and claim it. *"Today salvation has come to this house."*



First UCC Weekly Offering

Apr 3	\$ 1,865.00	Apr 10	\$ 2,065.00
Apr 17	\$ 2,320.00	Apr 24	\$ 1,700.00



Thank you so much for your continued support during this trying time. We will be collecting the offering each Sunday during our drive-in worship services beginning this month, or you can mail your offerings, or drop them off in the mail slot. If you have received a stimulus check, please consider tithing a small portion, as we are still incurring operating costs. Your support is greatly appreciated!

Treasurer's Report

General Operating Checking Account Balance	\$22,993.13
Breakdown:	
Bills to be Paid through 05/01/2020	\$1,187.42
Mission & Evangelism Balance	\$2,601.35
General Fund Balance	\$18,862.21
Youth Fund Balance	\$0.00
UCC Local Mission Grant Balance	\$342.15
Reserve Fund Balance	\$1,007.39



WIDER MISSIONS/ OUTREACH MINISTRY



Our outreach for the HELP ministry has necessarily decreased since we cannot bring items to the church. We are also usually only doing short trips for our own groceries.

Some ideas to continue to be involved with HELP: according to the executive director, monetary donations are down & are needed. Their address to send a check is:

HELP Ministries, Inc.
1320 Lasalle Ave
Hampton, 23669

Another idea, if people want to donate food staples, Pastor Ed is willing to drive around & pick these up from front porches. His pick up day will be May 5. Let the church office know by phone message or email that you would like items picked up. He will then deliver items to HELP. This way everyone can still stay inside & use social distancing, but still contribute to our usual mission project. More dates will be given later. Tuesday is the best day for Pastor Ed & Chandler to do the traveling. Of course, the best & easiest way is monetary donation.

Isiah 49:3 "You are my servant, in whom I will be glorified." By doing Missions, we are being God's servants & blessing others. Thank you for always being faithful in supporting our various mission activities.

~Carol Diehl