



WOODBURY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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The Life of the Church

by Pastor John

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Dear Church Family,

The Coronavirus pandemic has altered our daily routines in countless ways. If you're like me, you have moments when you're going stir crazy and wondering what to do with yourself when your normal activity is so curtailed. Here are three suggestions:

CONNECT – Around mid-day yesterday I was in a funk, feeling immobilized in the face of a challenge that is so daunting and unprecedented for all of us. Then I remembered the motto of a counseling center in Texas that has been helpful to me on several gloomy occasions: **“It’s a lot easier to act your way into a new way of feeling than it is to feel your way into a new way of acting.”** I decided to take action, and made several phone calls to church members who, like me, are in the age range which is especially vulnerable to this virus. I immediately felt better and developed momentum to remain connected with others.

Please remember that **we have designated three times each week for a conference call among church members: Sundays at 11:45 AM, Mondays at 7:30 PM, and Wednesdays at 7:30 PM.** I encourage you to dial in at **203-633-3808** to share updates about yourself and express your concern for others.

Woodbury First Selectman *Barbara Perkinson* has proposed a unique way for us to remain connected as a wider community during this season of self-imposed isolation. **Starting tonight, church bells will be rung from steeples throughout the town from 8:00 – 8:02 PM.** WUMC will gladly participate in this ritual of solidarity and hope. Please consider ringing bells in your own home during this brief time period each night.

PRAY –Yesterday, I got a text message from a friend in another state who hasn't been active in organized religion for decades. He acknowledged that since this crisis began he had been “saying his prayers more than in a long time” and “hoped they still count.” I replied without hesitation, “YES, they still count!” Even when our prayers are occasioned only by a crisis, God welcomes our petitions on all occasions. No matter how dormant our prayer life has been, God always

Open Hearts . Open Minds . Open Doors

rejoices when our prayer life comes alive again. God hears and responds to the prayers of all God's children, even those – perhaps especially those – who have been out of touch for a while.

Intercessory prayer has long been one of the earmarks of our congregation, but it is especially important to our faith community “for such a time as this.” To supplement our sharing of Joys and Concerns during weekly worship and the daily ministry of our prayer team, we've just been offered another vehicle for intercessory prayer. WUMC is part of the “Valley Cooperative Parish,” a network of neighboring Methodist congregations spanning Greater Waterbury and the Naugatuck Valley. **Our cooperative parish has decided to set aside Mondays as a day of concentrated prayer while we weather the pandemic.** Individuals are asked to pray for a half-hour each across a 24-hour period, starting Monday, March 30. To sign up to participate, follow the link: <https://pastorjimfumc.wufoo.com/forms/zy19j2y1jrdf3j/>.

GIVE – As we all know painfully well, the global pandemic has triggered a financial crisis on top of the health crisis. As Christians, you and I should not only be concerned about the status of the stock market and major corporations. We should also be concerned about the impact of this crisis on the “little ones” whom Jesus cared about: small businesses, families, and individuals. I'm aware that many of you are now working remotely, and that some of you have lost work altogether as a consequence of nationwide closures. We as church want to be sensitive and responsive to any in our fellowship who are enduring financial hardship.

This is a time when we may have fewer resources to share and have more incentive to conserve our resources at all costs. Still, we're called to grow in our spirit of generosity toward others and remain faithful to God's ministry and mission through the local church. The Finance Committee has informed you of **alternate ways of giving to the church** during this season when we are scattered rather than gathered – e.g., **mailing your contributions to the WUMC office or setting up electronic giving**. Six months ago, I was skeptical about e-giving for myself. I valued placing an envelope in the offering plate as a tangible act of worship each Sunday. It finally occurred to me that my mode of giving makes no difference to God, and that e-giving helped me to be a more consistent giver. Now, I'm doubly grateful that I made the change! Giving to the church is one less thing I have to be concerned about when so many other concerns occupy my mind and heart.

Grace and peace,

John