



Lakewood Congregational Church

An Open and Affirming Church of the United Church Of Christ

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Rev. Joanna D'Agostino
Senior Pastor

March 13, 2020

Dear LCC Family,

Based on rapidly-changing information regarding Covid-19, and rooted in our desire to love our neighbor as we love ourselves, we have decided to cancel our in-person gathering on Sunday and worship in an online format for the next three weeks. Small gatherings with a known list of attendees (i.e.: Strengthsfinders and Spiritual Gifts, Executive Team Meeting) will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

Our Executive Team has committed to aligning our decisions with those of Lakewood City School District. Upon learning that Governor DeWine ordered an "extended spring break," which means that all Ohio schools are closed for three weeks starting Monday, AND in keeping with the ban on all gatherings over 100 people, AND at the recommendation of the Living Water Association and the Heartland Conference of the UCC, we made the decision to move to an online format for worship for the next three weeks.

This worship style, which is new territory for all of us, will be recorded on Saturday afternoon, edited, and shared with you by email and social media on Sunday morning, accompanied by a full manuscript for those who have trouble hearing or using video on their computers.

I know this sounds odd. Worship is a communal act and yet our current call is to isolation and distance. Will you try it with us? I'm convinced that with open hearts God will find a way to abolish isolation even in our physical distance. God has ways, you know? I suspect God will reach us in ways we didn't even know God could.

The conversation about canceling worship feels very shocking, and yet we have a more important conversation ahead of us:

How will we "Be the Church" to one another in this time?

- *How will the babies be fed?* We may have opportunities in front of us to support our school district in providing food for the 42.8% of children who qualify for our district's "Free and Reduced Lunch" program and therefore rely on public school for nutritional support. We are discussing these opportunities with the school board and the Lakewood Ministerial Association.
- *How will the children be cared for?* Many of our own families and our community's parents are working hourly jobs for which they cannot take off while the schools close for three weeks. Our Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministries, Rachel Burns, will focus on facilitating the care and keeping of our church children in this time. If you are in need, connect with her (rachel@lcc-church.org) and she will support you.

- *How will we care for our homebound members?* Suddenly, our understanding of “homebound members” has expanded to those who are on varying levels of social distancing. How will we make sure our members know that our hearts are connected to theirs? These conversations will take place within our Diaconate and our Outreach Committee. Please reach out to the church if you are in need of connection.
- *How will we tend to our own anxious bodies and souls?* It is not God’s will for us to live in a constant state of agitation and anxiety. Take a deep breath. Lower your shoulders. Unclench your jaw. Double down on kindness to yourself and to your neighbor.

Trust your church and trust God. We have committed to one another in love, support, and care, and we will do just that. I have seen this church show up to be the village for babies, aging adults, and everyone in between. I have no concerns about your qualifications and preparedness for such a time as this.

Our Executive Team is meeting on March 16th in the evening. Discussions on these topics will take place. We invite you to share your thoughts with us for consideration. We are deeply aware that God is working in and through this odd and unanticipated time.

Because of Jesus Christ, Healer and Redeemer,

Pastor Joanna,
with the full support of the Executive Team