

### **An Announcement from Your Congregation Council**

Our congregation council has been deliberating about how best to encourage the well-being of our members and the members of our community in the face of the coronavirus pandemic. Our denominations have all recommended that congregations suspend activities for the next few weeks in order to contain the potential spread of the virus. Today, we decided to join the effort to keep our neighbors and our communities safe. We will be suspending all activities, including worship, effective immediately, through March 31<sup>st</sup>. If our efforts and the efforts of the community around us are successful in limiting the spread of COVID-19, we will resume normal activities and worship beginning April 5, 2020, which just happens to be Palm Sunday. Until then, we will encourage the practice of “social distancing” to keep each other safe.

### **A message from your Pastor**

I am grateful for your commitment to fostering the well-being of our whole community, even when it means that our community will be suspending the very activities that give us life. This small sacrifice, on behalf of our most vulnerable neighbors, may be the biggest contribution we make this year to making Christ known in our local community. While our community worship is integral to our lives of faith, and I will miss that precious time with you during the next three weeks, there is no doubt that this is the right thing for us to do. Our office will remain open our regular hours, and I will be at church on Sunday mornings, as usual, in case you would like to come in for a time of conversation or prayer. I am also very happy to visit you during the week. Just call me at 970-626-5803 if you would like to set up a time to meet in your home.

Our staff will continue to encourage you to find ways to nurture your faith at home during these weeks of necessary social distancing. In fact, as we slow our frenetic pace of activity, we may find more time for the kind of faithful retreating that Evan and Cheri Howard were encouraging us to do at our last Monday workshop. Here is a link to Evan’s teaching about taking spiritual retreats: <https://spiritualityshoppe.org/treasure-from-the-desert-a-brief-guide-to-private-personal-retreats-with-the-lord/> . I strongly encourage each of us to invest in fostering a sense of spiritual space in the weeks to come.

We will also produce a devotion for your use at home on Sundays when you’re not in church. Look for that in a weekly Newslink distribution. Though this is a time of social, or physical, distancing, it can also be a time of spiritual growth for all of us. May we be blessed with this gift of space and time to spend with Christ.

### **A message from your Congregation Council Chair**

Our priority right now is to commit ourselves to the well-being of our neighbors. Our suspension of church activities through March 31<sup>st</sup> is simply the best action possible to ensure that we don’t, in any way, contribute to the spread of a virus that has potential to harm the most vulnerable in our community. In addition to taking this action, our council has planned for heightened sanitization in our facility as well as modifications to our communion distribution, when we resume worship, to ensure safety for all.

We encourage you to follow all the precautionary measures that have been shared through the media to reduce the potential for the spread of the virus. Avoid crowds, wash your hands frequently, stay home if you feel ill, and continue to stay well-hydrated and nourished. Lean into our congregation for any support you need. And please pray for the safety of our neighbors.

If you have any questions, please contact Tom Chase at 970-240-9711.

### **A message from the Care Ministry Chair**

We may not be meeting together in the sanctuary for now, but we're all part of the same body of Christ, and we can continue to care for each other! Social distancing does not mean social isolation. We hope you will continue to stay connected to other congregation members as well as your friends, neighbors and family members. Reach out to one another; check in with one another by telephone, text and e-mail; send greeting cards; or share a home-baked treat with a neighbor (Even if you leave it on the front stoop with a note, ring the bell and depart, they will still feel the love behind your gesture!). Just a quick "hello" goes a long way, especially for our members who live alone.

With the threat of COVID-19, many of us may not feel like venturing out, even for necessities. If you feel any hesitation whatsoever about venturing out to pick up groceries, pick up prescriptions or over-the-counter medication, or running other necessary errands outside of your home, let us know. Call our Care Ministry coordinator, Lynne Evans, at 970-901-1204, or Neighbor to Neighbor at 970-325-4586 for assistance of any kind or for something as simple as a friendly visit to keep you connected to the outside world. Together we will weather this storm! Peace and love to each of you.

### **A message from the Administration and Finance Ministry Chair**

It takes a leap of faith for a congregation as vibrant as ours to suspend all activities. But our leaders have faith in our members to continue supporting the congregation with their generous and regular giving, especially during this trying time. Please consider mailing your contributions to church each week during this period of suspended activity. The office will remain open during its regularly scheduled hours. You can mail contributions to:

The United Church of the San Juans  
P.O. Box 295  
Ridgway, CO 81432

In addition to being mindful to continue our congregation support, we are aware of the financial impact our community's preventative measures might have on hourly workers and others that depend on weekly paychecks to make ends meet. If you are aware of anyone who is struggling because of the impact of social distancing, please have them contact Pastor Pam. Our discretionary fund is available to provide emergency support to people in need. If you have any questions during our period of suspension, please call Chuck Anderson at 970-626-2270.