

This was sent out on 3/11/2020 to all churches in the Minnesota Conference UCC from Rev. Sharon (Shari) Prestemon, Conference Minister:

## Thinking ahead

If a COVID-19 outbreak should occur in your community, it could last for several weeks, at which time public health officials may recommend community action to reduce spread, exposure, and severity of the disease. That may include discouraging all gatherings over a certain number, which could directly impact our ability to gather for worship or other events. (This has already occurred in parts of Washington state, where UCC and other churches have been advised to discontinue gathering for worship for now.) While we are currently a long ways from this and hope this will not be the case in Minnesota, we should nonetheless think now about how to respond should that occur here.

- Decision-making: Be clear about who will make decisions about canceling worship or other events and how those decisions will be determined and then communicated more broadly.
- Communication: What mechanisms do you have in place to efficiently communicate with all your members about the status of worship and other events? If you have social media platforms or email Listserv's, be sure you have current information and encourage everyone in your congregation to join your social media platforms if they can.
- Finances: If worship cannot occur for some period of time, and thus weekly offerings are not taken, do you have a way for your members to give electronically? Do you have any reserves that can help you meet a shortfall in income so that essential expenses can still be met? How will people be paid in a timely way?
- Caring and connecting: If worship and other gatherings cannot take place, how can you still continue to connect and care for one another? Do you have social media or other communications through which you can provide outreach and care? Can you post or email sermons and devotions for spiritual encouragement, or perhaps live-stream messages or some form of worship on Facebook? How will you and your congregation check in on those who live alone or might otherwise be most vulnerable to illness?
- Insurance: Does your church have insurance that might include a clause providing for business interruption coverage or other coverage in this kind of situation? Check with your provider now to ask.
- Renters: If you have organizations renting or otherwise utilizing your building, be sure to communicate with them about how your church and their organization will communicate and cooperate during this time.