

MICHIGAN CONFERENCE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Grace and Peace to you!

It is hard to believe it has only been a couple weeks since we started “sheltering in place” in response to the Covid-19 virus. Much has happened and we all are trying to figure out what it means to live our faith and callings in times like this. I wanted to write you to share some information and some thoughts on our ministries during this time.

First, Governor Whitmer has issued the “Stay Home, Stay Safe” Executive Order for all of Michigan (https://www.michigan.gov/whitmer/0,9309,7-387-90499_90705-522626--,00.html) Under this order activities that are not directly related to sustaining and protecting life are prohibited and people are ordered to stay in their homes. We have had some questions about what this might mean in terms of worship and ministry. **In light of this Executive Order, and in order to live out our commitment to love and care for one another, all in-person worship services, meetings, studies, prayer groups, etc., should be suspended until further notice. Local churches should also avoid additional activities like gathering small numbers of people in sanctuaries to create a streaming service, conduct “drive thru” worship or communion services, or facilitate any meetings where people gather. Stay home. It is a very simple directive and will save lives.** We should honor our sisters and brothers, both inside and outside of the church, by enduring these inconveniences and seeking new and creative ways to proclaim the Good News and “be the church.”

Second, many local churches are starting to discuss Holy Week and Easter services. Although circumstances may change, I believe it is unlikely we will be at a significantly better place in the progression of this pandemic. So I would suggest the following: (1) Let us find ways to remember and celebrate Holy Week and Easter remotely, by using tools like teleconferencing, phone calls, notes and letters, etc., (2) When the pandemic passes and we are able to gather in our churches again, let us commit as sisters and brothers in the United Church of Christ to celebrate Easter again, in person. This could be in the Summer or Fall. We will use that time to rally together, to proclaim our thanks for God’s care and love that has brought us through this time. We can celebrate the people-the nurses, doctors, grocery workers, and all those that have cared for us during this time. Let us sing about the Resurrection of Christ among the changing leaves or the falling snow! Let’s wear our Easter hats or outfits and brush the snow off them when we get in the door! Let us hide the Easter eggs in the sanctuary, let us eat the cake and drink the lemonade around a camp fire!

My dear friends, we have a way to go with this pandemic. It is not going to be “fixed” for a little while. So, we are going to have to be the kinds of people that believe what we preach...Easter follows Good Friday.

Blessings,

Rev. Phil Hart
Transitional Conference Minister