



March 13, 2020

Beloved: I know there is anxiety, and even fear, that is swirling around us as more and more news about Covid-19 in our country and in the world comes to our attention. We are a people who trust that God is holding each of us, strengthening each one of us for whatever unfolds in our lives. We know God is also often in the disruption of our lives---even this level of disruption that we have not ever known before.

Based on information from the CDC, local health officials, and the Governor's office, here are the choices leadership is making at this time for the Beloved Community.

- We will **not meet for worship or any other gatherings throughout the month of March**. We hope to return to our worship gatherings on April 5th, Palm Sunday.
- We will live-stream a worship service on the Beloved Community Facebook page at 9 a.m on Sunday mornings.
- Our staff will still be working from the office, perhaps moving to working from home when needed, particularly in the areas of providing online resources and services to the wider community.
- We will close the building to all gatherings, starting on Sunday--with the exception of our AA group who may still choose to meet, and the Farmers' Market, with whom we will be making a weekly decision. They will be open tomorrow, March 14th.
- We will provide resources for online study, both on Facebook and on website.
- Pastor Jane will make a Zoom conversation available to folks at least once a week. (There will be a limit to how many can take part, but we will do what we can with this free resource.)
- We will be posting regular prayer opportunities and practices on our Facebook pages (Beloved Community, Redeemer and Intercession) daily as a way to gather.
- We will also have special posts for families with children on our Facebook pages.
- **And perhaps most importantly: Call one another---and those you haven't seen lately---so any distancing practices we are taking at this time to insure the health and welfare of all do not lead to isolation.**

Bishop Mansholt of the ECSW of the ELCA Church has sent out a pastoral letter; it can be found here:<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1mBIQUkholvZFP7fv4L8xC45Q7kQsqF0m/view>

And from the Diocese of Fond du Lac, Bishop Gunter's letter can be found here:
<https://www.diofdl.org/news/covid-19-statement>

On our Facebook page, we have posted responses from Presiding Bishop Eaton (ELCA) and Presiding Bishop Curry (TEC). https://www.facebook.com/Beloved-Community-529131960888471/?modal=admin_todo_tour

We are learning just how interconnected we are; we are learning how our health is dependent on the health of our neighbors---globally. We are learning how our wealth is tied into our neighbors---globally. God continues to tell us that we belong to one another. Economically we do not know the impact this will have on ourselves, our families, our community and these churches of the Beloved Community. We ask that you consider using our online donations (found on our website www.belovedcommunitysp.org) or use the mail to send in your gifts which allow us to participate in God's ministry as the Beloved Community. One thing we do know: our bills won't stop coming and our staff needs to continue to be paid.

Let us be mindful of one another. And let us help those with whom we are connected to be mindful of others, as well. Fear narrows our scope. And people who are vulnerable are the ones who pay the price for this narrowing of concern that happens with fear. Since my mother receives dialysis at home, this has become all too clear. She requires antibacterial hand soap (not the bar kind) and hand sanitizer to be on hand for the processes she and my sister do daily for her dialysis. And those two commodities have become very hard to come by---even online. We are trusting in the goodness of folks to share from their stockpiles. Luckily, we have the resources to find adequate supplies right now for my mom's needs to be met. But, Beloved, what about others with less resources?

In times of crisis, we cannot allow ourselves to dwell in fear. Our concern must be enlarged during these times, not constricted. It is love that allows us to enlarge our concern as a response to fear's constriction. Let us live and move from Love, then, Beloved.

Let us pray: Gracious God, it is good for us to gather as your beloved in community. We treasure your presence with us in word and meal, song and prayer. Be with us in these days when gathering together as often as we would like is not possible. When we must be apart for reasons of safety, we trust that you surround us with your sheltering wings. Encourage us in connecting as we are able, reaching out to our neighbors in need and being persistent in prayer. We ask this in the name of Jesus, our constant companion. Amen.

Love, peace and blessings, Beloved. God is with us.
Jane