



March 13, 2020

Dear TUS Community - Members, Friends, Renters, Community Partners:

With the news surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic around the world and showing up close by, the Board of The Unitarian Society takes seriously our responsibility to do what we can to safeguard all our health, to be a good civic actor in the public sphere, to role model how to care for one another in times of distress and disruption. Our thanks to an ad hoc group of lay leaders whom we consulted over the past few weeks: Angela Pineiro, Sunday Services Chair; Russ Gale, Safety Task Force Chair; Marlene Mulroney, President of Board of Unitarian Montessori School; Phyllis Shaw, Pastoral Care Chair; as well as staff: Jess Bors, Acting Director of Religious Education; Nicholas Place, Music Director; Donna Rice, Office Administrator. And the whole TUS Board: Paula Lieb, Secretary; Clif Ashcraft, Vice President; Kathy Scarbrough, Treasurer; Rich Corridore; Barbara Kubey, Doug Liebau, Tony Razzano.

If there is one message we hope that you take away from all of our communications, it is that

None of us is alone. We are all in this together.

Other houses of worship and UU congregations are facing the very same decisions - we aren't alone. Given what is happening all around us, including a confirmed case in East Brunswick, the Board held an emergency meeting last night. Holding each of you - Member, Friend, visitor, renter - in our hearts, we made the decision to close our church building. This becomes effective Saturday, March 14 and lasts until we are able to determine that it is safe to be open. This applies to all TUS-sponsored activities, which are considered either cancelled or postponed during this time period, as well as to our renters. In a month's time, the Board will assess the circumstances. The Board intends to be in regular communication among its members and with the congregation.

Sunday Services - online!

We are now, and always have been, more than our building.

The good news is that we live in a time when we can use technology to continue and strengthen our connections and to build new ones. This Sunday we will begin our first experiment in conducting our Sunday service online using Zoom. If you can download Zoom.us to your computer, smartphone or tablet now, that would be good. At 10:30 we will have our new online Sunday service that we expect to last around 45 minutes. On Sunday evening at 7pm, we will hold family chapel. Please look for a separate communication with the link no later than Saturday evening.

Our Caring Community Continues!

This is no time to go it alone. This is the time to build up our individual resilience by contributing to our communal resilience. This is the time to risk learning new technology, to try something outside your comfort zone and be delighted at the possibilities you find. Throughout the week we are hoping to schedule multiple opportunities to connect online using Zoom. We can and we will show up for one another.

If you are a congregant in need of support during this next period, please contact Rev. Karen at revkarentus@gmail.com or Phyllis Shaw at grenthum@gmail.com. Let us know how we might be of support to you. If you become quarantined with the corona virus, other TUS congregants may be able to help shop or bring other resources to you. Remember when stocking up on food to also stock upon medicines and fill all your refills. Families experiencing any kind of serious illness, hardship, and death are still very much encouraged to reach out to Rev. Karen right away, as well as to other community and government resources.

If your anxiety, worries, fears, or sense of loneliness gets to be too much, reach out to Rev. Karen: email revkarentus@gmail.com; call or text (732) 649-8110. Or make a time to meet using this link to Rev. Karen's schedule: <https://calendly.com/revkarentus> -- we can meet online using Zoom or, we may be able to go for a walk, or meet in person, depending on the circumstances at the time.

We Will Return!

Though it is hard to see the shape, breadth, and length of what is in store for us in the coming weeks and months with this pandemic at hand, know that we are a resilient people. We will find ways to strengthen our sense of connection and purpose in the midst of this disruption. When all restrictions are lifted, we will resume our regular congregational activities and work to rebuild our community.

**We are all in this together.
This is how we care for one another.**

Please do stay informed. We will continue to reach out using our weekly emails and Facebook, as well as old fashioned phone calls. We are looking into how we can form new clusters of care, based on geography and neighborhoods, so that we check in on each other. During this time, TUS staff will still be working in the building as long as it makes sense from a health point of view. Congregational business continues, if attenuated. This includes board meetings and committee work continuing by Zoom and email. If we experience any losses in our community (we will be praying for all), we will even try to find ways to mourn together electronically.

As of the writing of this letter, our Unitarian Montessori School is temporarily closed. The Board that governs the School will continue to make decisions in the best interest

of the health of our school families, following our established policies and the directives of the East Brunswick School District.

On the journey with you,

Karen

Rich

Rev. Karen

Rich Phelan, President, Board of Trustees