



United Church of Christ, National Setting
A Faithful Response, with Worship, to the Coronavirus12q
Compiled by Justice and Local Church Ministries, United Church of Christ

As we look at how we are responsive to the health needs of our local communities, many churches are making the decision whether to host worship together in person; or virtually to have connection digitally if not possible in person. Congregations are looking towards what their county health officials and local school districts are deciding, and often following suit.

This document serves as a resource for faithful tips and considerations for congregations.

We will be adding more information in days to come. But to get started:

If you faithfully choose to worship apart; here are some resources:

Consider technology. There are several platforms that can be of use for worshipping apart:

- Pastors could use Facebook live and Facebook followers could watch (streaming music this way is not recommended, re: copyright; see notes below)
- A simple conference call,
 - Many platforms are free online to set up, such as <https://www.freeconferencecall.com/>
- A recorded message from the pastor sent via email, text, and the usual communications methods.
- YouTube live or creating and posting a video message on YouTube and sharing the link via usual communications methods.
- Let members know as soon as possible where services will be offered.
- Be careful about making recordings that involve copyrighted music--see below.
- Pastors can share links to songs that would have been part of the service.
- If technology is a barrier, pastors can post the text of the sermon on their website or Facebook, or email it out to their community.

Note: If pastors are streaming using their smartphone, turn off orientation lock and move phone to landscape/horizontal, so the stream goes out in a viewable format.

Pastoral follow-up We recommend that in addition to scheduling a time to worship together technologically, pastors and lay leaders (deacons, elders, et cetera) also consider scheduling a separate time to check in regarding pastoral care needs that are NOT worship.

Tips for worship: (Model services will be posted here)

Liturgies: Lenten liturgies posted on **Worship Ways** [Worship Ways](#) can be adapted to use in virtual settings.

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The **exception to this is the section of BOW entitled *Resources for the Church Year***, beginning on page 478. These prayers are copyrighted to their different authors, and the UCC cannot give permission to stream them.

We will work on finding and sending out liturgies created for virtual settings in weeks to come.

Music

- When streaming worship, know that there are **copyright implications**.
- **Avoid using pre-recorded music on anything you stream! Music from professional recordings is not covered by typical church copyright licenses. To use this, you will need to be in touch with the producers of the recording.**
- Hymns and songs in the public domain may be used without any further permission or license. Check the index at the back of the New Century Hymnal or other hymnals to see if the song is still copyrighted.
- **For songs under copyright which are performed live:** The usual licenses such as CCLI <https://us.ccli.com/streaming-license-terms-of-agreement/> or OneLicense <https://www.onelicense.net/how-it-works> offer streaming licenses along with reprint licenses. Check out their websites for more information.
- Alternatively, creatively invite people to engage! Pause your livestream saying something like, “At this point, we will sign a hymn together by stepping away from the phone and singing Amazing Grace, as we wash our hands. We will come back together in 3 minutes.”

Embodied responses

- You can also invite a collective response via motion, with language like:
“Pass the peace by holding your palms to the screen (if video) or to the sky (if audio). Imagine energy of connection together digitally.”

Offering

- When you do the offering, know that if your church has an online giving platform, you can encourage people to plug in at this point.
- Remember--the CDC says that mailing a check will not spread the germs! Pastors could remind virtual participants where to mail their offerings via the USPS.

- For times such as these, consider getting set up now to take online donations via your website or via text-to-give options through services like [Tithely](#), [Givelify](#), [Pushpay](#), or [MobileCause](#), among others.

If you faithfully choose to worship together; here are some resources:

Here is a bulletin insert: <https://www.uccfiles.com/pdf/Coronavirus-and-the-Church-Bulletin.pdf>

Make sure to **wipe every surface** that is often touched with disinfectant: doorknobs, handrails, the tops of pews.

In your sanctuary, **spread out!** Create some distance between persons.

Consider options of **passing the peace without touch**, through intentional eye contact, palms outstretched, or beyond.

Some language might be:

- “We will pass the peace this morning through making intentional eye contact with our neighbors, saying Peace Be With You.”
- “We invite you to have your hugs and handshakes without touch, by crossing your arms across your chest.”

If weather permits, this may also be an opportunity to gather outside in open space, minimizing the risk of structures often touched.

Offering

Be sure that if you are passing a plate, you change your offering flow to have as few hands on the plate as possible, and/or invite people to come up and place their offering into the plate.

Model Prayers:

<https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2020/03/02/coronavirus-prayer>

<https://reformjudaism.org/blog/2020/02/27/coronavirus-prayer-medical-scientists>

Engage a Ritual to connect without touching: Create a wide circle, but don't join hands. Instead, invite people to put out their right hand, palm up and their left hand, palm down. Move so that your hands cover your neighbors' without touching. Ponder the space for grace there, the room for the Spirit among us.

Reclaim an Ancient Ritual for this moment: Lavabo “I wash” Psalm 26:6-8

I wash my hands in innocence, and walk around your altar, singing a song of thanks, telling your wonderful deeds. Lord, I love your house, the place where your glory dwells.”

In the early Middle Ages, Benedictine monks would gather at a fountain outside the sanctuary and wash their hands before entering church. In the Roman Catholic Mass, the presider ritually washes hands before touching the elements of bread and wine praying, "Lord, wash away my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin" (Psalm 51:2).

Create a Lavabo ritual as members of the congregation enter the sanctuary--offer hand sanitizer or soap, water, paper towels and some suggested prayers: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right* spirit within me" (Psalm 51: 10); ."There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God...." (Psalm 46: 4a) "Where do you get that living water?" (John 4:11) Imagine the possibilities of cleansing, healing, refreshing water (and its useful companion, hand sanitizer)!

We are here to support you:

JLCM Worship Leaders have volunteered to be present for zoom pastoral care support during the following times:

March 13 3:30pm-4:30pm EST with Sue Blain, Minister for Worship & Gospel Arts
Join URL: <https://UCC.zoom.us/j/538116554>

March 17 3:30pm-4:30pm EST with Rachel Hackenberg, Pilgrim Press and Faith Forming Publications
Join URL: <https://UCC.zoom.us/j/838421818>

March 24 3:30pm-4:30pm EST with Chris Davies, Faith Education, Innovation and Formation
Join URL: <https://UCC.zoom.us/j/255855881>

March 30 3:30pm-4:30pm EST with Tracy Howe Wispelwey, Minister of Congregational and Community Engagement
Join URL: <https://UCC.zoom.us/j/992536087>

Here are some further resources from the denomination:

From the National Setting:

https://www.ucc.org/disaster_coronavirus_resources_from_the_ucc

https://www.ucc.org/traci_blackmon_word_on_coronavirus

From the Southern New England Conference:

<https://www.sneucc.org/coronavirus>

to add resources, email daviesc@ucc.org