

## ***First and Center***

Pastor's Blog

March 11, 2020



“Social Distancing.” That’s the instruction being given out, along with washing your hands, in order to try to contain the COVID-19 outbreak. What that means is to keep about three feet between you and other people. And -- stay out of crowds of over a hundred people. And, if you are elderly or immune compromised, don’t take public transportation or stand in long lines for anything.

We will continue to worship at Center Church, but we will keep in mind the need to be safe, a place for healing; not infecting. We began on Sunday to observe the Passing of the Peace differently, which is difficult in this church, which likes that ritual to go on for some time! We will not touch each other; instead we bow, or wave, or give the “Live Long and Prosper” or the Peace sign. If the virus continues to be a threat as we approach Easter, we will consider a different way to celebrate Holy Communion as well.

We also don’t want “social distancing” to take on the sense of lack of caring, or, at worst, racism. The Asian community in this country has become the target of racist words and acts. Someone sneezed on an airplane in flight recently and that precipitated an incident on board. This is getting out of hand.

Although we may need to keep our bodies apart for a time, it is critical that we still reach out to others, here at church or anywhere, with love and care. Call someone you would like to visit, but should not -- especially someone who is ill or elderly. Send a card. Send a text. I’m planning to get dinner tonight at my favorite Korean restaurant on Pratt Street and probably will have Chinese food over the weekend. I may even buy some Corona beer! We need to support businesses that are being shunned for ridiculous and racist reasons.

I am working with others in the Southern New England UCC Conference on how we can support churches to do worship more online than we already do, and how we can support our members in other ways. More than ever now, we need to BE church more than we need to GO TO church!

~ Rev. Shelly Stackhouse,  
Transitional Minister