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Let's Talk: About Deep Breaths



By Elane Johnson

On March 12, 2020

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By: Conference Minister Diane Weible

Deep breaths. Everywhere I go that seems to be the anchor for many of us. Take a moment to breathe. Deep. Breathe in God's love; breathe out the anxiety and concern.

Now that we have all had a moment to ground ourselves, I wish I could say I will now offer solutions. I can't. Like me, I'm sure you all are inundated with emails, news stories, suggestions and advice as to how to address the COVID-19 pandemic in our communities.

The consistent and, I think, best advice I have seen is to follow your county's department of health recommendations. They are

not the same for every county. The size of the group seems to be a factor for many of the recommendations and that is different for different counties and even changes in the same county in a given day.

Some counties have published guidelines for faith communities and that is always a good resource.

One thing I hear a lot is, make a plan. Maybe your county is not recommending you cancel worship this Sunday but if they do or if you decide it is time to not meet in person, what would be your plan for continuing to be supportive to one another? Isolation, especially among our elderly members, is a real concern.

“Othering” is another concern and faith communities play a part in making sure that this pandemic is not blamed on any particular person or groups of people. When we become afraid to touch and hug one another, how do we find community and connection that is so important for the human soul? How do faith communities lead during this difficult time? One thing we do really well is offering love, compassion and support in the most difficult times. We have an opportunity to dig deep and imagine what we can offer our wider communities at this time.

The other day I joined with some of my clergy colleagues in this Conference to share how our faith communities are addressing these very real concerns while also working to maintain community and support and love in the process.

I want to share some of the suggestions that came from that call:

- Teach members how to say “Peace be with you” in sign language so our hands will be active in this ritual that is sacred to so many of us.

- Ask newer or younger members to make phone calls to members without internet to see how they are doing.
- Bring back the phone tree so members are checking in on other members.
- Start a letter or card-writing campaign to let members who are self-quarantined know you are thinking of them.
- “Tech Deacons” can go to the homes of members who may not use computers to help them get online for any community gatherings that may need to happen online.
- If you have to cancel worship and can’t meet online, can you mail or email sermons or other worship materials for members to use for personal devotions?
- Using “narrow cast” as a way to share worship with your congregation without a public broadcast. Members register for a Zoom meeting that is worship. It is not open to the public but is an opportunity for community members to be together in virtual space. Rev. Bruce Reyes-Chow is offering a Zoom Worship Preparation workshop next Monday, 8-9:30 am. Register [HERE](#).
- And, of course, for churches with capacity (and who have researched copyright laws for using music and other resources online), online worship broadcasts are a great option.

A chaplain in Indiana-Kentucky Conference penned a wonderful reflection that I think expresses well that which we must be particularly conscious of as we move through these days. With her permission I am closing with her words. Know that you all are in our prayers and we are here if we can help.

Oh God, I'm Spinning Out: A Prayer

Rev. Dr. Hannah Adams Ingram

There is so much I do not know

There is so much I cannot see

There is so much I cannot control



In the moments I feel powerless, I will take a deep breath
trusting that I am tasked only with doing my part, not the whole

In the moments I feel unsure, I will take a deep breath
trusting that I am not alone and that together, our wisdom will be
richer

In the moments I feel anxious, I will take a deep breath
trusting that there is no depth I can fall out of reach of the Spirit
that holds me close

What I do know is that my life and love and worth extend far
beyond my work

What I can see is that spring follows every winter and new life
pokes out from cold ground

What I can control is my breath and the love I inject into a world so
clearly lacking it.

“And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the
greatest of these is love.”

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Laura Rose

wonderful prayer !

March 12, 2020 at 11:48 am

Reply



Rev. Kathryn M. Schreiber

Thank you, Diane. I'm wondering if we're being too congregational — each church doing their own thing. Could we add a page to our conference website with “Worship at Home” options with links to services broadcast by our tech-savvy churches and downloads for from our old-school churches who are print-centric? We could SHARE!

March 12, 2020 at 1:08 pm

Reply



Diane Weible

Good idea, Kathryn. Let me see how we can gather those.

March 15, 2020 at 8:25 pm

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