Dear beloved First Universalist Community,

I’m writing to let you know that we have decided to move on-line for both worship and church business for the next four weeks, at which point we will re-assess. We made this decision after deep and careful consideration, rooted in best practices as described by the CDC and the Unitarian Universalist Association, which is currently urging in person gatherings of no more than 25 people. Now more than ever we need connection and community, so please know that, as one of my colleagues said, the church is not closed, simply the building. We are actively stepping into the demand of this moment that we imagine new ways of being in community, of supporting one another, and of noticing and caring for the most vulnerable among us. Below are some of our first steps. There will certainly be more.

WORSHIP- We will worship online, using Zoom. Zoom is a very simple video conferencing platform to use- clicking a link will take you right to the online gathering. If you don’t have a computer or access to the internet, there is also a phone number- you can simply call in. We’ll not only offer a worship service, but also break out groups- essentially online small group ministry. We’ll send out a separate email with more specific information about how to use zoom (and who to talk with if you’d like help figuring it out). For now, if you’d like to explore Zoom on your own, here are some tutorials:

[https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/206618765-Zoom-Video-Tutorials](https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=https%3A%2F%2Fsupport.zoom.us%2Fhc%2Fen-us%2Farticles%2F206618765-Zoom-Video-Tutorials%3Ffbclid%3DIwAR0tq-gohjDU3kZrqOWPCaukf5GYaqdVrK4Y59-nzjiIvR4WJt8kLCgmUlY&h=AT0pf1SC4IAxfMjr2U_dA-Dcf4l0ZPR5tOK7Z6qvRjqb_IdzhdcyxMKmyTlo11QsoGZ54ShsK8Lix1m7G16uFbsFg3_zXiG5WVFdoLTE2ak2RUtcekjPvJ9NQsMyiOnYl2q8G5v2vS7hdxeDHTv31qWxEA&__tn__=-UK-R&c%5B0%5D=AT2E5I3qZHdraW19Qqbboic13V8smVn6g0xIgGUZ-DJ2irzlfdtZaQg_Y3uXx9hzOg5RLM28Aa9pzGePE_bws2fnxbZvXJqAoGvK76VCiCUqJS3Is28y4PuCRA-pqg-WhWSeSc0Zbf7oIOZsPhJOIg5vYCZYrd-D3QfyKpglgsfCpRPTpSvUoXq7x2N70pI)

CARING AND CONNECTION:

In the next week, we are planning to establish geographically-based Community Circles of 5-10 households. Each Circle will have a lead member who will coordinate with the other members, ensuring that everyone has the friendship, food, medicines, and spiritual resources that they need during this time. If you are someone who would be willing to be a Circle Leader, please let us know by emailing revjodi@auburnuu.org If you are someone who is vulnerable due to an underlying health condition or other reasons, please let us know by emailing the address above. These circles are an opportunity to connect with community members who are our literal neighbors in ways we wouldn’t otherwise, and build new networks of support that last far beyond this situation.

Beyond Community Circles, we also want to be responsive to all who may be needing a little extra support. There’s so much about this experience that can produce anxiety, grief, confusion. It may cause serious financial hardship. It can bring up past traumatic experiences and crises. If you are struggling right now, please reach out, even if you aren’t yet sure what might be helpful.

CHURCH BUSINESS:

We are encouraging leadership to hold meetings over Zoom, and will provide the resources to do so. Our zoom account will allow leaders to schedule and run their own online meetings. If you are in leadership, you will soon receive a separate email with the necessary information.

While our communal response will certainly shift over time as we gain clarity about needs and resources, what we know right now is that we are stronger together. Many of the steps we are taking as a church in this moment are the direct result of brainstorming and sharing resources with colleagues across the nation. In the same way, our own shared wonderings will lead to deep and powerful ways to be together that meet the demands of this particular time. We have been reminded that we are woven together in ways known and unknown. Our commitment to fierce hope and radical love will ensure that our response honors not only the hardness, but also the holiness, of that connection.

Yours,

Jodi