



# Buffalo United Methodist Church

April 2020

1000 30<sup>th</sup> Street NE  
Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52402



## A Pastoral Letter for Easter

Pastor Kathryn

Normally, I would be writing about Easter and its jubilant, festive celebration. We've completed a big chunk of Lent, and Easter week will soon be here. But this year feels completely different because of the uncertainty and sense of disaster hanging over the entire country.

Easter is my very favorite church holiday. Who doesn't love singing "Christ the Lord is Risen Today" in a sanctuary dressed to the nines? Or "He Lives"? We have new banners for the sanctuary, courtesy of Barb Crawford, and lilies available to order. Hopefully we're done with snow, and we will all be able to gather in our best bib and tucker.

But this year is different, oh so different. We just don't know if we'll be celebrating together, lamenting the deaths of good friends together, or figuring out a brand new "normal." We're not the only ones, and perhaps we have it easier than some of the big churches because we can communicate more easily with each other. But that doesn't make OUR feelings any less important.

How are you feeling emotionally? (I sincerely wish that you are all feeling fine physically.) Confused? Uncertain? Uneasy? Fearful? Secretly glad not to be one of the sick or dying ones? Stressed out with a constant pit in your stomach? Worried about the economy and how it will affect your living? Abandoned? Lonely? Invisible? Unimportant? Separated from God? Angry at God for letting the pandemic happen?

Take a moment to identify which feelings belong to you. Write them down, if that helps. I see two major resources that we can all use. The first is **community**--

and we specialize in community here at Buffalo. Now is the time to be on the phone, send an email, drop a card in the mail. Maybe even stand on opposite sides of the street and raise your voices. The best way to share is face to face, but it's not the only way.

Think about taking flowers to a nursing home, or talking through a window. Smile at people you see when you're careening down the toilet paper aisle. Surprise someone who is laid off at work with support, or lighten a burden for those essential people working their heads off in order to care for us. And be sure to share your feelings. The chances are good that the person you're talking to feels just as isolated and angry. Be a safe person for someone to unload on.

The second is **God**. This is not the time to be a slacker on the prayer front. Whatever you need to say to God has been heard before, and probably worse. Look for Psalms and Old Testament passages that speak to you. I recommend Psalm 23, Psalm 27, Psalm 91; James 1: 2-4; Matthew 11:28-30; Philippians 4:6-7; Matthew 6:25-34.

While I've been working on this letter, I keep hearing an old hymn in my ear:

*What a friend we have in Jesus,  
all our sins and griefs to bear.  
What a privilege to carry  
everything to God in prayer.  
O what peace we often forfeit,  
o what needless pain we bear  
All because we do not carry  
everything to God in prayer.  
. . . Is there trouble anywhere?  
In His arms He'll take and shield thee,  
You will find a solace there. (Joseph Scriven)*

So, take it all – the good, the bad, and the ugly – to the Lord in prayer. And don't hesitate to take it to a fellow member of the congregation, or to me. Over the next week, I will try to be in touch with most of you to get a feel for how it's going. Feel free to contact me, even if it's the middle of the night--I wake up amazingly cheerful!

I'm not giving up on Easter yet. Who knows--maybe we'll have an outdoor service on Easter and drive-through Communion on Maundy Thursday. There's room in the new worship center outdoors for us to social distance and still worship as a group. I will be conducting services on Sunday, March 29 that will either be on YouTube or I will email an attachment to you. God will find a way--and so will we!

\* \* \* \* \*

## **“Standing Together by Standing Apart” Bishop Laurie Haller's March 23 Blog Posting**

What a week it was! Last Tuesday Governor Kim Reynolds issued a State of Public Health Disaster Emergency. This requires the closing of restaurants to the general public, except for carry-out, drive-through, and delivery. Health clubs, gyms, theaters, and gatherings of ten or more people, including worship services, are prohibited until the public health disaster is over.

Then, a few days later, we learned that our 2020 General Conference in Minneapolis will be postponed to a later date because of the health risks involved in holding a major event with thousands of people in attendance.

This is an especially tough time because many people in Iowa still remember the 1980's Farm Crisis, when farmers in the United States, especially in Iowa, were confronted by an economic crisis more severe than any since the Great Depression. Many who relied on agriculture for their livelihood faced financial ruin. The same possibility may become a reality today if the COVID-19 Pandemic continues for months. Some smaller businesses may never recover, and social service agencies may not be able to recoup financial losses because of declining contributions. Even churches will be affected if congregation members are not able to keep current with their financial contributions.

Last Friday, there were 281,000 jobless claims in the United States, according to analysts at investment bank Goldman Sachs. They are also predicting that by this Thursday those weekly claims may balloon up to 2.25 million [actual total was almost 3.3 million]. It is critical to support our business owners, employers, employees, and all those who are suffering economically.

These are, indeed, unprecedented days, as we live into a coronavirus world. Paul's words to the Philippians (4:6-7) seem appropriate as we seek to remain calm and centered in Christ. “Don't be anxious about anything; rather, bring up all of your requests to God in your prayers and petitions, along with giving thanks. Then the peace of God that exceeds all understanding will keep your hearts and minds safe in Christ Jesus.”

A new word has entered our vocabulary over the past several months: “social distancing.” Because of the overly infectious nature of the coronavirus, we have been encouraged to keep at least six feet away from one another. This does not eliminate the possibility of infection, but it does reduce or slow down the number of infections.

Some people believe that social distancing has a negative connotation, as if we are not to be in any kind of connection with our friends and neighbors. On the contrary, it is absolutely critical that we stay in relationship with each other at this time. Various alternative phrases have been offered such as:

“Standing Together by Standing Apart”

“Social Distancing without Social Isolation”

“Spiritual Connection; Physical Distance”

“Socially Separate; Faithfully Engaged”

All of these options point to the essence of our human challenge at this moment in time. When you and I are forced to stay home and slow down, we realize that we have been given a precious gift: the opportunity to spend time with our family, reconnect with people from our past that we haven't been in touch with for a while, and form new connections, all the time recognizing how much we really need each other in order to get through this. . . .

In my reading and conversations with others, there are simple things that we can and must all do to remain healthy and safe. At the same time, we can also make a difference in the lives of others who do not have

enough material, financial, or human resources to live comfortably right now. Here are a few suggestions:

- Every day, make a phone call, send an email, or write a card to a shut-in or someone who feels isolated.
- Make a grocery run for someone who can't get out.
- Limit watching the news; it need not be on all day.
- Get outside in the fresh air and take a walk.
- Take the initiative to reconnect with an old friend.
- Start that book you've been intending to read. You can even check out my new book, *Wandering into Grace; A Journal of Discovery and Hope*.
- Offer childcare to neighbors who work and cannot stay home with their young children.
- Don't hoard toilet paper or Chlorox wipes.
- Thank people who are serving you in the grocery store, gas stations, or restaurant take-out counters.
- Don't forget to stay current in your giving to your local church.
- Pray for all those who have been infected as well as for our health care professionals, who are working tirelessly to bring hope and healing.
- Email your stories of how you and/or your church are making a difference at this time to [iowacares@iaumc.org](mailto:iowacares@iaumc.org). I'll include a few stories every Wednesday in my Caring Connections videos.

I would love to hear how you are coping with the COVID-19 Pandemic in your daily life and how you are reaching out to others in creative ways. "Prayer for a Pandemic," written by by Cameron Bellm, a young mother from Seattle, helps us gain perspective.

*May we who are merely inconvenienced  
Remember those whose lives are at stake.*

*May we who have no risk factors  
Remember those most vulnerable.*

*May we who have the luxury of working from home  
Remember those who must choose between preserving  
their health or making their rent.*

*May we who have the flexibility to care for our children  
when their schools close*

*Remember those who have no options.*

*May we who have to cancel our trips*

*Remember those that have no safe place to go.*

*May we who are losing our margin money in the tumult  
of the economic market*

*Remember those who have no margin at all.*

*May we who settle in for a quarantine at home*

*Remember those who have no home.*

*As fear grips our country,*

*let us choose love.*

*During this time when we cannot physically  
wrap our arms around each other,*

*Let us yet find ways to be the loving embrace of God  
to our neighbors.*

*Amen.*

**April 23 Wedding Anniversary!**

Fred & Marlene Himes

### April 2020

<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>
"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud." 1 Corinthians 13:1			1 <b>April Fools' Day</b>	2	3	4
5 <b>Palm Sunday</b>	6	7	8	9 <b>Maundy Thursday</b>	10 <b>Good Friday</b>	11
12 <b>Easter Sunday</b>	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

**April Birthdays**

1 - Bob Fish

3 - Verna Cartano

12 - Andrea Kelley

16 - Joyce Hartmann

25 - Nancy Seufferlein

25 - Dani Lacy

## **The Buffalo Church Calendar**

Until further notice, all church activities at Buffalo have been canceled or postponed. Information on the resumption of Sunday worship and other ministries will be posted on the website, distributed through email, and shouted from the nearest mountain top.

## **Mission of Hope**

On April 7, Bertram UMC will be helping the Mission of Hope distribute sack lunches to clients. If you would like to volunteer, please call Mission of Hope at 365-1782.

## **April Special Offering**

The special offering for April is Golden Cross Sunday. The offerings are used for health and welfare ministries in the annual conference. The March collection for UMCOR was \$249.50.

## **Bison Blog**

During this period when regular church activities are suspended, we will be posting items to the Bison Blog 3-4 times per week: <http://buffalounitedmethodist.weebly.com/>

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## **World Day of Prayer**

The World Day of Prayer service was held on March 6<sup>th</sup>. Ladies of the church made desserts from Zimbabwe including Rusk and Black Pepper Cookies. Thanks to everyone who helped Pastor Kathryn with the service.

## **Our Financial Obligations**

“Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” (Luke 6:38)

During the COVID-19 outbreak, the church still has many bills to pay. Please do not forget to mail your offering to the church address (Buffalo United Methodist Church, 1000 30th Street NE, Cedar Rapids, IA 52402) or put the envelope in the locked church mail box by the meeting room door. Thank you.

Church Sign: “Had not planned on giving up quite this much for Lent.”

