

The Winchester Unitarian Society

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April 5, 2020

Dear Friends,

I send this note to all the households we connected with in response to the State of Emergency related to the Coronavirus pandemic. Thank you for taking the time to either talk by phone or to complete our “needs and gifts” survey. We seek to ensure that our members and friends receive the practical, emotional and spiritual support needed to navigate these strange times as best as we can.

Update: to the best of our knowledge, no one in our congregation has contracted COVID-19.¹ However, we learned through the survey that some are experiencing significant financial challenges as a direct result of the shutdown. While members and friends haven’t asked for financial support, generous donors to the Ministerial Discretionary Fund – before and after the pandemic – provided us the resources to offer funds to these households. These gifts have been acknowledged and appreciated. Also, as we are now unable to collect donations of supplies (Huggies and Peadisure) for the LexRAP family we are supporting, we are shipping these supplies directly to the family, the cost covered by the MDF. Your generous dollars at work! **If you are struggling financially, please contact Heather at heather.janules@winchesteruu.org.** We are in this together...

If you have been attending worship services via Zoom and reading *Highlights*, you know that a number of our programs have shifted to an on-line format and there are new programs, created in response to the pandemic. If you are not currently on the *Highlights* list and wish to join, simply go to the front page of our website (www.winchesteruu.org) and click on the link at the top marked “Join Our Mailing List.” The form will walk you through enrollment. There is something for everyone in this time of confusion, boredom, loneliness and maybe a little anxiety. And if you have an idea for other ways to connect, let us know!

Winchester Unitarian Society is composed of thoughtful and generous people. Many indicated a willingness to support someone challenged by the pandemic. Considering this incredible pledge of volunteer effort, I thought I’d mention that a coalition of non-profits in Winchester (organized by Network for Social Justice) is also gathering input regarding “needs and gifts.” **If you have a need or are open to volunteering to assist someone outside the congregation, please complete this form: <https://tinyurl.com/WinC19nandg>** It will also be published in upcoming issues of *Highlights*.

Overall, the message I am returning to and sharing again and again is “connection, not perfection.” I have heard many say that they are not quite themselves right now and hence can’t seem to get much done. This is normal as the times we are in are distinctly abnormal.

Be gentle with yourselves and with one another. Take care of yourself – you are a great gift. And, when you can, take care of others. Be open to savoring the solitude of “social distancing” and embrace opportunities to connect when loneliness takes hold. Find a way to cherish the life we are given and do what you can to protect the lives of strangers and loved ones alike. And know that whatever happens next, you - the good people of the Winchester Unitarian Society - are doing what we can to meet fear and grief and uncertainty with love and hope, the great heritage of our shared faith.

Please stay in touch should your personal situation change. Again, we are in this together...



With affection,
Rev. Heather, Parish Minister

¹ May 6, 2020: Since this letter was issued in early April, two members of WUS, Linda Reck and Madeleine Smith, died from the Coronavirus. We join their families and many loved ones in mourning their passings.