

March 15, 2020

Dear Guemes Church friends:

Here is an update, since my last ‘missive.’ After a bit of worship in our fellowship hall (with ‘social distancing’ in effect) about a dozen of us met today to name and decide upon ways to navigate the waters these tricky days of coronavirus uncertainty. Herewith details-and-summary.

With Gov. Inslee closing all schools state-wide last week, this past Friday our UCC Conference Minister, Mike Denton, sent out an email to clergy, urging that all our congregations: not have any in-person worship for a *minimum* of six weeks; cancel/ postpone face-to-face meetings, pastoral visits, gatherings— this includes suspending building use to any groups; to remember our giving \$ [use the mail, we decided]; to consider our building for emergency use.

This is a needed clarity for we of Skagit county, superseding some suggestions by Skagit Public Health. We’re now more fully onboard, with **keeping connected to each other a particular priority**. We are well aware of a fluid and extremely uncertain timeline. Without our usual face-to-face connections, we can and will draw upon:

—**the phone**. Just pick it up and check in with someone you know or barely know. (Note: Julie has a list—copied and shared today— with names only, to help jog our memories.)

—**email**. Not only do many of us use email regularly, **I will be starting up an ‘in the loop’ email list. I will offer occasional-to-regular postings** (poem, reading, reflection). Others are welcome to respond, or post as well (using a single ‘reply’ or ‘reply all). **However, if you would like to receive these postings (and have yet to sign up) send me your name and an email you would like me to use.** That way, Lynn can keep the newsletter email list private. All ‘in the loop’ emails will appear in the header, like most ‘sent’ email. If you are uncertain about the number of emails but want to be on the list? Oh, you know: just select ‘delete.’

—**other connection options**. The newsletter will continue its usual monthly offerings. Facebook: Brenda will be putting together a particular Guemes Church Facebook page during this hiatus-time. For any interested and using Facebook, just ‘friend’ the church and Brenda will give the okay. Facetime: the iPhone comes with an app that allows one to call another directly and talk face-to-face. Could be fun! (Maybe Android phones have something similar?)

**Also:** The Red Bags collection will continue in April, with Connie overseeing. Bob Anderson will be making sure word of our cancellations/ postponing is out and about. The Guemes Grapevine group (more later) are standing by to assist in calls, confidentiality, help getting food as needed, etc. One important topic today concluded with a consensus that our building will be made available to the hospital if it is needed. Julie will have those conversations, with Gary Curtis as building consult. **And this will be my last email via Lynn** (thank you); **all others will be from me at [revbalmer@icloud.com](mailto:revbalmer@icloud.com)** (*A simple email to me re ‘in the loop’ will sign you up.*)

Through all this, we are ‘church,’ a kind of community that roots itself/ ourselves in a regard for the Holy in the midst of life. May our prayers be in action, in quiet, in spirit and in truth. I am grateful we will share in this journey of uncertainty, suffering, and compassion— with one another, and a Spirit who weaves with strength, creativity, and amazing grace.

Love and Peace—

Sally

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