

UUFM Members and Friends—

We have begun figuring out **how to stay connected while practicing social distancing**. You might want to check our website (<https://uumankato.com/>) for updates and links to new activities. We are working on ways for all of us to check in with each other, to share needs and offers of assistance, and to provide nourishment for our spirits in these anxious times.

Right now we are using our tried-and-true methods (e-mail, postal mail, Facebook and webpostings), but we are also exploring new ways to share with each other. If you have skill/experience in these or other social media (blogs, youtube, video production, videoconferencing—and any of the other media that my children and grandchildren tell me I am too old to even be aware of), **please volunteer to help us shape our platforms**. Contact me (tonyfil@hickorytech.net) or Rev. Rita (minister.uumankato@gmail.com).

Even more in these times, we need to care for each other. **If you need something, reach out; if you have help to offer, reach out**. I know, we are all Minnesotans and it's not just north of Boston that they say “good fences make good neighbors”—but while we are keeping our social distance we will need more than ever to lean on each other (BTW, reread Frost's poem—it might not be what you remembered). Right now, if nothing else, let me or Rev. Rita know. We are working on virtual ways for “sharing coffee” with each other. If you have ideas (or skills) for doing this, share them with us.

We are also ramping up to offer more individualized pastoral care to members and friends who are at risk and to respond to the potential isolation of individuals who may live alone and/or suffer from heightened anxiety in these uncertain times. **We need to double the number of volunteers in our Pastoral Care Team** so we can be in touch with members who may need support. Many on our Care Team are themselves in the “at risk” age group, which limits what they might safely do; we need to lower the average age of the team's members. This challenge will represent a significant shift in past practice and Rev Rita will be closely involved with the team to assess the congregation's pastoral needs and determine how we most fruitfully allocate our collective resources to meet those needs.

In the meantime, keep calm, carry on, and keep doing the good things you do (just differently). And take advantage of the lull to get outside and walk in the sun and listen to the Spring birds. Nature can be a great healer in anxious times.

Tony Filipovitch,
Board President