



# Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Ames

Growing *spiritually*. Creating *community*. Striving for *justice*. Learning to *love*.

March 13, 2020

Dear Members and Friends of UUFA,

Your Board and Staff have been closely following the recommendations of the Center for Disease Control (CDC), health professionals, and the UUA in addressing Fellowship life and how we care for one another during the spread of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19. On Thursday, Susan Frederick-Gray, president of the UUA, strongly recommended that gatherings of 25 or more people be avoided.

After much careful thought, **we have decided to close the Fellowship, effective immediately.** As such, this letter serves as our regular Weekly Email, outlining the beginnings of our plan for moving forward. **This closure means that we will not gather in our sacred spaces for Sunday services, Religious Education, or meetings/gatherings throughout the week until further notification. Please do not schedule meetings off site or in alternate locations.** Now is a time to find alternate ways of being together while we remain physically apart. We have made this decision to protect our congregants, especially the elderly and those who have health vulnerabilities. We have a significant number of people in high risk categories, and we choose to protect everyone. It is part of our mission: Learning to love.

We will gather and meet in new ways. The staff and I are learning to utilize a program called Zoom. It is an online video-based medium that will allow us to gather from our living rooms and share time together, whether that be a Sunday service, a committee meeting, a book discussion, or a one-on-one conversation with the minister.

**On Sunday morning, you are invited to join us for first online service at 11:00 am.** Simply visit <https://zoom.us/j/997408874>, follow the on-screen prompts from Zoom to get started, and you'll be automatically entered into the right virtual space. This will be a different and new experience for us, and it will keep us connected. The title of the service remains the same: *Wisdom in a Frazzled Age*.

The staff will be collaborating together and with other UU leaders to offer Religious Education resources and experiences, as soon as possible. OWL as a curriculum requires an "in person" gathering and will be rescheduled when the Fellowship is up and going again.

We are encouraging staff to work from home to the greatest extent possible. While you may occasionally see staff onsite, we ask for your patience and understanding in the complete closing of our Fellowship spaces and face-to-face gatherings. Building access has been fully restricted; if access is needed, please contact a staff member. Staff remain available via the methods listed below, as their personal availability allows:

Rev. Kent McKusick - [minister@uufames.org](mailto:minister@uufames.org), 515-292-8929

Bradley Duckstein, congregational administrator - [uufa@uufames.org](mailto:uufa@uufames.org), 515-292-5960

Jamila Johnson, religious educator - [reeducator@uufames.org](mailto:reeducator@uufames.org), 515-423-0490

As we work to make opportunities for connection available, we hope to provide additional online space for this beloved community to continue to gather outside of Sunday services. If you want to arrange a virtual meeting or discussion, let us know. We will do our best to help you do this as we learn a new way of connecting.

We will do our best to guide you through these new experiences as we learn as a community, and we hope to provide additional resources next week to help congregants in their learning. If you would like to get a head start, we invite you to visit <https://youtu.be/vFhAEoCF7jq> for a brief tutorial on joining a Zoom meeting.

Together, we will be resilient, adaptive, patient, and creative in our approaches to being together and reaching out to one another. As Susan Frederick-Gray wrote: "Remember that, as we have to adapt quickly and try new things, perfection is never the goal. The goal is to care for one another and live compassionately."

If you need assistance or pastoral care during this time of closure, please let me know by phone (515-292-8929) or e-mail ([minister@uufames.org](mailto:minister@uufames.org)). I will be checking e-mails and phone messages at the office and at home.

If you have not seen the most recent communication from the CDC, please read this information on self-care and being prepared: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html>

The office and building will be closed. As my friend and colleague Rev Sunshine Jeremiah Wolfe wrote this week: "Stay away AND connect. Stay away from what is potentially harmful and embrace creatively how we can connect, in spite of it all. You are not alone (but if you are, reach out)."

We are here for each other. We are here for you.

On behalf of the Board and Staff of the UUFA,

Rev. Kent McKusick

