



Experience Digital Union

Our Building Remains Closed — Union Church Remains Open
unionboston.org/online

19 May 2020

Dear Union Church Family —

Yesterday, Governor Baker released protocols on “re-opening Massachusetts,” which includes lifting the stay-at-home order and ban against public gatherings. Places of worship are permitted to re-open while following mandatory, minimum safety standards: <https://www.mass.gov/lists/safety-standards-for-places-of-worship>. *Worshippers would be required to wear masks, only limited numbers of persons could gather, celebration of the Lord’s Supper (Communion) would be prevented, and regular disinfecting would be necessary.*

Thankfully the “curve has been flattened” and the health care system is not completely overrun. Still, we are alarmed that people are still dying in Massachusetts as extraordinary rates and coronavirus is [disproportionately harming communities of color](#). We are [far, far from achieving a livable, equitable “new normal.”](#)

Union Church Remains Digital. In light of this reality and these rules, at this point, it *does not make sense* for us to re-open Union’s church building. Indeed the “[Three General Rules](#)” of The United Methodist Church are: *Do No Harm. Do Good. Follow Practices that Keep Us Growing in Faith.* Out of a desire to ensure that members of our Union family continue to be kept as safe and healthy as possible our Sunday worship, connection groups, and all meetings will **still** occur virtually until further notice.

Here’s why:

1. **We sing. We hug. We see each other.** No-contact worship in the church building just isn’t the type of worship that reflects who we are at Union.
2. **We commit to radical solidarity** with particularly vulnerable people (e.g., older adults, children, immunocompromised), who are valuable parts of Union’s family especially. During this Year of Elevation, minimum standards do not maximize the safety of the whole.
3. **We maintain that the church is *more than a building anyway*.** Union will continue to innovate and imagine new ways to be church... responsibly.

At Union, we care for our family *together*. Until we can **all** gather safely, we will continue to be church virtually.

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We are planning for the painful reality that it *may not* be possible to gather regularly for Sunday worship until a vaccine, or other significant safety mechanisms, emerge. Both faith and science are telling Union to stay our current course. Already, we have dubbed our virtual church experience “**Digital Union.**” We are adapting and innovating ways for us to be who we are, while keeping our community safe. On May 10th, we announced that our former intern Kyle Walden has been named the **Minister for Digital Union and Community Engagement.** *Next month we will share a broader plan that’s currently under development by church leadership.* Our building is closed, but Union Church remains open!

This is hard. We miss gathering for worship in our sanctuary and hugging each other during the passing of the peace. It’s pains us that we cannot break bread around the Communion Table, and for this long period we’re fasting from the Lord’s Supper. Even when we find new ways to connect, as we have been doing through Zoom videoconferencing, technology glitches still happen and disrupt our adapted patterns.

- Check out this [Boston Globe article](#) that mentions Union’s adaptation this past Sunday.
- Watch “[Sacramental Hunger and Eucharistic Practice](#),” which brilliantly reflects on the importance of fasting, and why, for the time being, we are not celebrating “online communion.”
- Experience last Sunday’s service on [YouTube](#).

Finally, we’re continuing to be Union together. You’re invited to **Worship. Grow. Connect. Give.**

- **Worship** — We will gather this **Sunday, May 24th at 11:15am for Virtual Church service by Zoom.** Click this link to join the service: <https://zoom.us/j/178147880>. Or dial-in: +1 312 626 6799, Meeting ID: 178 147 880
- **Grow** — We’ve got four ongoing study groups and book clubs to help deepen your faith journey. Sign-up at unionboston.org/online.
- **Connect** — There are three opportunities throughout the week to connect with your Union family for 15-minutes (Mondays at 7pm, Wednesdays at 7am, and Fridays at noon) – log-in at unionboston.org/online
- **Give** — Supporting Union financially is more important than ever. *Please make a recurring online contribution* by going to unionboston.org/give. Or **Text-to-Give** by texting dollar amount to 84321. You may also mail checks to Union Church | 485 Columbus Avenue, Boston MA 02118.

So, beloved, we’re still being smart about this situation, because we love this “place called Union.” Perfect love — and science-informed faith — overcomes fear (1 John 4:18).

With hope and peace,



Pastor Jay Williams
Lead Pastor



Ruby Blake
Lay Leader



Dr. Gary Bailey
Chair, Church Council



Pastor Nikki Young
Assistant Pastor



John Jemison
Chair, Board of Trustees



Dr. Melissa Pearson
Chair, Staff-Parish Relations