

Minister's Message 4-15-2020

Hello everyone! This is Pastor Melinda from Shiloh UCC. We are still social distancing and this is still my family's little apartment at Rolling Hills. I hope everyone had a meaningful Easter celebration, even though we could not be together in our beautiful Sanctuary.

It is great that we can meet online. I know it is different than worshiping in person. I know we try to smile and put on a happy face for Facebook, our Zoom and Google meetings, but deep down many of us are worried. Just like we only show the camera the nice shirt we put on top, but people can't see the worn pants or flip-flops we are wearing under the watchful eyes of the camera, we hold back the majority of our concern. Even as we are making jokes, we don't want to show the world our fear and anxiety. But you do not have to put on a smile for me.

Now is not the time to be wonder woman or superman. And it doesn't matter. You do not have to carry the whole global pandemic on your shoulders. God is our superhero. Let God carry your load, for a while.

God loves you and wants the best for you. It doesn't matter if you are strong or not, we all need comfort and consolation once in a while. Again and again we have to be reminded (I belong to this group, as well) that God is a mighty God. Again and again, we have to be reminded that everything will be alright. We belong to a powerful and loving God.

Since this is the fundamental truth of our existence, since all the power is in God's hands, there is nothing to worry about. Again and again we have to go back into that peaceful presence, where our hearts can find rest. Again and again we have to be reminded that God loves us.

Especially now, when we are in the hopeful season of Easter, it's good to know that there is Someone who conquered death. There is Someone who understands our fear and anxiety, because he lived here on earth among us. There is someone, who suffered the uncertainty and danger of death.

The Coronavirus may be novel, but Easter is not. Jesus Christ is risen. Life is more powerful than death. Our God has control over life and death. Even when the events of our lives seem crazy and meaningless, God is in control. God understands the chaos. God is above the chaos. Let the virus do its work, but do not be afraid.

We don't have to carry our fears alone. We can give all our worries to God. Trust God. Trust God and the ultimate power of the Universe will lead us through the danger of this outbreak. Challenge yourself during this time of confinement to grow closer to God.

Use the solitude to grow in wisdom so that, in the end, we will all come out of this spiritually more mature, understanding, and loving. That is my hope for this difficult time of social distancing. I challenge you to fill the loneliness with God's

presence. Make the best of this situation by becoming the best you, you can be. In times of crisis, there is an open window for God realization. Let's meet God in the silence together.

Also, I want you to know that while you are going through this I am also praying for you. Your minister is praying with full power. I am here to listen to you if you need someone to talk with. I am available. I am charging my batteries with the infinite source so that I can be available spiritually. If you need to talk, I am reaching out to our congregation daily.

Now, let me share with you one of our Sunday readings, Psalm 16. When I first read the Psalm, I knew I wanted to share it with you. So, listen to it and then pray with me quietly.

Psalm 16

Song of Trust and Security in God

- 1 Protect me, O God, for in you I take refuge.
- 2 I say to the Lord, "You are my Lord;
I have no good apart from you."
- 3 As for the holy ones in the land, they are the noble,
in whom is all my delight.
- 4 Those who choose another god multiply their sorrows;
their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out
or take their names upon my lips.
- 5 The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup;
you hold my lot.
- 6 The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
I have a goodly heritage.
- 7 I bless the Lord who gives me counsel;
in the night also my heart instructs me.
- 8 I keep the Lord always before me;
because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.
- 9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices;
my body also rests secure.
- 10 For you do not give me up to Sheol,
or let your faithful one see the Pit.
- 11 You show me the path of life.
In your presence there is fullness of joy;
in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Let us pray!

Loving God, show us “the path of life.” Give us hope and consolation, when our hearts are trembling. Strengthen us so that we may comfort others. Protect us (vs.1) and our loved ones, for we run to you.

Protect the people who are protecting others: be with our first responders, especially our healthcare workers during these scary times. Protect the people who are still working and keeping our lives somewhat normal: we pray for the people who remove our trash, clean our streets, bring us our packages and mail, work in pharmacies, airports and the list goes on.

We pray for all people who are working for all of us. Teach us to be grateful for each other. Help us to appreciate each other. Give us humble and loving hearts to be patient with each other, especially the people we are locked up with.

Loving God, your Psalm says that “in your presence there is fullness of joy.” We so need this joy right now. Fill our hearts with security, peace, and joy, that in your “right hand” we are safe and secure. We pray all this in the name of our Resurrected Lord, Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray:

Our Father...

Hymn #237 “In the Garden”

Thank you for listening. Tomorrow, Thursday morning at 10:00 AM I will be live on Shiloh UCC’s Facebook page. If you would like to chat with me (you will be able to *write* questions or comments in the chat window), please come and join me.

Benediction: And now, go in peace and may the peace of God fill your hearts always. Amen.