

May 11, 2020

For immediate release

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Westlake's Church of the Redeemer UCC Honors Ohio's COVID-19 Victims in Lawn Memorial

For Church of the Redeemer United Church of Christ in Westlake, Ohio, it's all about love. The congregation has assembled a front lawn memorial of white flags honoring Ohioans who've died due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"So many friends and family members across Ohio — in our community of Westlake and in adjacent areas — have been affected by the pandemic," said the Rev. R. Brooke Baker, senior minister. "This memorial of flags is a visual expression of Christian love to honor those who've died, as well as show support for the families and friends and communities affected."

The memorial was assembled May 9 by Baker and church members, and consists of more than 1,200 flags — a number that will grow as the death count rises — set in rows. Accompanying signs explain, "Remembering Ohio's COVID-19 Victims."

Rick Garcia, Maggie Stahl, and their children helped in the set-up. "Rick and I feel it's important for people to recognize how serious this illness is. Even when we begin to control the numbers, there have been too many losses," said Stahl. "Each flag we put in front of our church doesn't only represent a death. It represents a beautiful LIFE lost, a grieving family, and a missing piece of the community."

The display will remain on the lawn for several months, Baker said, and as more Ohioans die, more flags will be added.

"As with everything else these days, love looks different," added Baker. "While it used to be about exchanging a hug or sharing a meal, these days, one way Church of the Redeemer UCC communicates God's love to all is through white flags on the front lawn. We hope it will help passersby know the comfort and presence of God's love."

Church of the Redeemer UCC is located at 23500 Center Ridge Road in Westlake. It is a Just Peace, Open and Affirming congregation. All are welcome.

NOTE TO EDITOR: *photo credit for photo attached to the story should read "Cal Zunt photos."*