



## Watch for the Morning: Social Distancing As An Act of Compassion

*We are grateful for your ongoing support that allows Week of Compassion to remain active even in times of uncertainty. While we have suspended staff travel for this season, we continue operations and remain in conversation with our partners about critical needs and responses, making preparations to support community recovery when the time comes. We will continue to share updated resources on our [website](#) and [social media platforms](#).*



*I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning, more than those who watch for the morning. -Psalm 130:5-6*

Life has changed significantly over the past two weeks.

In the “new normal” of social distancing in response to COVID-19, the Church is working hard to adjust quickly. Most have canceled in-person worship and gatherings, and moved to online platforms as a means of staying connected. Many are finding ways to serve their neighbors and continue critical mission commitments in spite of new challenges. The gifts of the church are needed now more than ever, and our Disciples congregations have shown incredible resilience in adapting to these unprecedented circumstances.

In a situation that continues to evolve quickly, there are many unknowns. There will be many opportunities for congregations to serve our neighbors as needs emerge in the days ahead. But for now, one thing is certain: **social distancing is an act of compassion**. Staying home and self-isolating to protect the vulnerable is what love looks like during this time when we don’t always know what else to do.

Of course, not everyone can stay home. Many continue to work on our behalf: medical professionals; those who care for the elderly; workers who stock our grocery shelves and those who keep our utilities running; childcare workers who work so that other essential personnel can care for the rest of us; and so many others who we may not see. In this moment of crisis, we are all connected in ways that we have perhaps taken for granted in the past. But it is precisely for the good of these populations that many of us can choose to distance ourselves. The decision to stay at home and away from crowds helps to protect those who are serving essential duties right now and at greater risk for exposure.

It may seem counterintuitive, that people of faith choose this moment of crisis to retreat from society. But these are uncharted waters; taking a step back and reducing the risk of infection for the most vulnerable among us is in fact a great act of service and sacrifice. The elderly, the immunocompromised, and those who care for them are at great risk from this illness. With limited testing available--and with many who are infected remaining asymptomatic-- any of us might have been exposed. Perhaps if we

all treat this disaster as if it has affected us, doing everything within our power to prevent further transmission, then many lives might be saved.

In this Lenten season, we “wait for the Lord,” together. As the Psalmist says, we watch for the morning. Maybe this year, that waiting and watching takes on a more literal meaning. We pray that this pandemic be contained and that a vaccine emerge quickly-- but our prayers become physically embodied as we wait, and watch, from home.

At a later time, we may be called upon to serve and respond in a different way together. But for now, waiting may mean just that-- waiting, watching from a distance, and praying for those who work for our good.

Week of Compassion works with partners to alleviate suffering. Our wider church lives into this mission commitment in so many different ways--around the world, around the year. In this season of uncertainty, we don't know what faithful response will look like in the long term. But for now, we have the power to act. Every time you choose to stay home, you are loving and serving your neighbor in a radical act of compassion. These daily sacrifices of social distancing will help us all stay well, as we watch for the morning.



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