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**IOWA, NEBRASKA
& SOUTH DAKOTA**
• C O N F E R E N C E S •
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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Dear Friends of the Iowa, Nebraska, and South Dakota Conferences of the United Church of Christ. I am the Reverend Brigit Stevens, your Conference Minister. I love you. You are in my fervent and constant prayers.

Thank you. Thank you for all of the ways you are being church in these unprecedented days. Thank you for NOT gathering together. Thank you for finding ways to connect with each other, with our friends, and with our communities and neighbors, **WITHOUT BEING TOGETHER IN PERSON.**

A year ago, the Boards of Directors of our three conferences met together to pray and discern together WHY we are the United Church of Christ, in this time and in this place. Collectively we heard the Holy Spirit say:

We are called to live into God's extravagant welcome and to advocate for justice. So that, **ALL** know love, safety, belonging, and dignity.

Now, I am not an epidemiologist. I am not a physician. I am not a scientist nor economist. I am a Conference Minister with a pastor's heart.

I am so proud of you. You are doing this! You are working hard, being creative, stepping into new roles, trying new things. **THANK YOU.**

This COVID-19 global pandemic is teaching us how truly connected we all are to each other. Big cities in densely populated states may have been the first to experience the devastation and grief of the losses of this virus. But, we are not immune here in the Midwest. And we are not isolated or disconnected. The virus knows no geographic boundaries. It pays no attention to state or county or country lines.

When those of us who have the option to stay home, do so, we protect and care for not only ourselves, but also those who do not have the same choices. Putting others' wellbeing ahead of our own conveniences is the way we follow Jesus best today.

Please continue to be the church, from home. Let this be our act of solidarity and love for God and our neighbors. God bless you. Thank you.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Brigit".

Rev. Brigit Stevens
Executive Conference Minister
IA, NE, and SD Conferences of the UCC