

This past week has been full of unexpected and dramatic change. It left us with incomplete goodbyes, it complicated our future plans, it found us torn from community -- the very community we long to be a part of when we are feeling scared or anxious. And it pulls us towards slowing down, towards caring for ourselves and each other in unexpected and perhaps untraditional ways.

As a USD community, we mourn an unexpected end. It has made some distant, hazy futures even more difficult to imagine, and is forcing us to face other futures before we feel truly prepared. By physically leaving campus, we begin transitioning, each into our new reality. Houses that aren't quite still homes. Deeply held concerns about money and scarcity. Recognizing that we might no longer have all the resources or space to continue doing the things we love or that give us purpose. Many of us are uneasy about the present and we know, collectively, that the future is unknown.

These past few days reflect our interconnectedness. This time invites us into a kind of solidarity. A realization that we are all, together, working towards the common good. The sacrifices are not equitable. The risks aren't either. But the invitations are plenty. Lynn Ungar's poem, copied below, has been rippling across the internet. An invitation into the center of it all.

What if you thought of it  
as the Jews consider the Sabbath—  
the most sacred of times?  
Cease from travel.  
Cease from buying and selling.  
Give up, just for now,  
on trying to make the world  
different than it is.  
Sing. Pray. Touch only those  
to whom you commit your life.  
Center down.

And when your body has become still,  
reach out with your heart.  
Know that we are connected  
in ways that are terrifying and beautiful.  
(You could hardly deny it now.)  
Know that our lives  
are in one another's hands.  
(Surely, that has come clear.)  
Do not reach out your hands.  
Reach out your heart.  
Reach out your words.  
Reach out all the tendrils  
of compassion that move, invisibly,  
where we cannot touch.

Promise this world your love--  
for better or for worse,  
in sickness and in health,  
so long as we all shall live.

--Lynn Ungar, 3/11/20

It is a paradox. We are very much together, apart. As Christians, we believe that God is present with us when it is darkest. It might be difficult to find God in a lot of this. And perhaps that is too high of an ask right now. But we invite you to find the light -- just a glimmer of it. Not a cozy bonfire or a sparkling sunrise just yet, but maybe the light of a lavender candle, or a flickering streetlight, or the pilot light beneath tonight's dinner on the stove.

As we move forward as a USD community spread throughout the world, we have some invitations for you. We know that you are very much still in transition, and so these will remain open invitations. But we want you to know that we are with you, walking with you, across the time zones and in the messiness and the darkness.

If you are interested in a one-on-one virtual check-in with a UM staff member, you can [sign up here](#).

If you want to sign up to be a part of a weekly online small group (via zoom), [sign up with this form](#).

And if you are interested in receiving weekly email reflections from UM, [sign up here](#).

In addition, please be sure to care for your emotional wellbeing in the midst of this time of uncertainty and anxiety. The [You are USD](#) webpage is full of helpful resources. USD Counseling continues to offer confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at (619) 260-4655.

We will be in touch again soon, including with more resources and opportunities to stay connected to Founders Chapel, USD and this incredibly beautiful and resilient community. For now, please let us know if there is anything we can do to support you. And be assured of our ongoing prayers for you, your loved ones and all those impacted by the coronavirus pandemic.

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