

OPINION

A letter of solidarity amidst COVID-19

Greater St. Cloud Faith Leaders Published 2:00 p.m. CT May 23, 2020

To the workers and families of our community during this COVID-19 pandemic:

We have all been touched by the effects of the coronavirus pandemic. Our systems – schools, businesses, health care, faith communities, organizations and every entity of our community – have been upended in the course of only a few weeks.

Through it we have seen individuals and families facing not only the profound loss of what we knew as “normal,” but facing new and uncertain realities of fear, sickness and economic difficulty. To all of our community during this time, we want you to know that we see you and stand with you.

We are also very aware that there are those in our community who are making great sacrifices for the lives of others. Those who our community relies on to go to work in order for the rest of us to get through this – our health care workers, social service and child care providers, grocery store employees, delivery workers and postal carriers and those in all areas of the food industry. Many of these members of our community put their lives at risk every day at their jobs.

In particular, we recognize those workers having to make the difficult decision of whether to pay their bills and feed their families at risk of contracting the virus, or losing their livelihood in order to keep themselves and those around them safe. For all those who do not have the privilege of staying home, as well as those for whom staying home creates economic hardship, we want you to know that we see you and stand with you.

As recent news reports and statistics have indicated, Stearns County is a growing “hot spot” for the virus, with numbers of those testing positive growing considerably. We recognize that this is in large part due to those members of our community who have had to continue to work during this pandemic.

We also recognize that many of these workers and those who have fallen ill are our immigrant and refugee neighbors. To those who face marginalization and barriers within our community that have only heightened during this crisis, we want you to know that we see you and stand with you.

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As faith leaders in the greater St. Cloud area, we believe that we all have a role to play in overcoming this pandemic together. We thank those workers who have been put at significant risk for the sake of others. We urge all employers to continue to put in place safeguards to keep their employees' and clients' safety as top priority. We invite all members of our community to continue to seek ways to show support, offer help and share hope.

The glimmers of hope that we have seen in so many areas of our community already are what help us to know with certainty, even amidst so much that remains uncertain, that we can overcome this together in the weeks and months ahead.

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Until then, may all of our Central Minnesota neighbors know that we see you, and we stand with you.

Signed:

Bishop Donald Kettler, Diocese of St. Cloud; Sr. Eunice Antony, St. Benedicts Monastery; Rev. Dee Pederson, Director Evangelical Mission, ELCA; Father Michael Peterson, St. John's Abbey; Mayuli Bales, Diocese of St. Cloud; Kateri Mancini, Catholic Charities; Rev. Darin Seaman, First Presbyterian Church; Joe Towalski, Diocese of St. Cloud; Loren Weinberg, Jewish Community of St. Cloud; Rev. James Albert, Higher Ground Church; Rev. Jennifer Thul, Resurrection Lutheran Church; Father Bill Vos, Catholic Relief Services; Deacon George Ham, St. John's Episcopal Church; Bette Bartos and Ron Marotte, Baha'i Community; Charlotte Stephens, Unitarian Universalist Fellowship; Jama Alimad, Central MN Islamic Center; Tom Ramsey, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints; Pastor Tim Routh, Salem Lutheran Church; Father Edward Vebelun, Harvest of Hope Area Catholic Community; Rev. Leah Rosso and Rev. Randy Johnson, First United Methodist Church

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