

BY JIM MERRITT

Special to Newsday

These are the times that try men's souls," the philosopher-patriot Thomas Paine wrote of the crisis at the birth of this nation. This week's clergy discuss how they can help — from a distance — in the soul-trying times caused by the coronavirus outbreak.

The Rev. Natalie Fenimore

Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock

Right now, we need to do what we have always hoped to do — but with more urgency and clarity: Call everyone to community, develop an awareness of our interconnection and interdependence, rely on the ability of faith to unite and comfort us, make available actions for justice and equity, gratitude and assistance.

In a time of social distancing and isolation, faith leaders can emphasize to those in their communities that they continue to be supported and connected. They can use technology for virtual gatherings and be "old-school," with calls, letters, prayers. It is important that no one be alone. Leaders can support the leadership of others by developing and supporting lay leadership teams in their congregations and communities.

As people are deprived of public worship and ritual gatherings, faith leaders can remind their communities that the purpose of the rituals remains central: sustenance for the faithful. Worship, ritual, study and reflection in groups online or with family at home can continue to provide this sustaining power. They continue to be efficacious — and because the intent of our social isolation is to protect others, as well as ourselves, this distancing from gather-



Natalie Fenimore

LNU CONGREGATION AT SHELTER ROCK



Rick Saladon

LISA DOUGLAS



Dahlia Bernstein

DAHLIA BERNSTEIN

ASKING THE CLERGY

What do we need now from faith leaders?

ing for worship is an act of care for our faith communities.

The Rev. Rick Saladon, Pastor

Living Water Church, Riverhead

I was born on a farm in 1951, a few years after World War II ended. I have lived through and witnessed many tragic and frightening events, including the Cuban missile crisis, the assassination of President John F. Kennedy and 9/11.

In all of these things, I have never witnessed the fear and distress that the coronavirus has caused in the hearts my fellow countrymen. When I think about what all religious leaders need to give their people right now, two things come to mind. First and probably the most important is hope — that they can survive this, that a better future is over the horizon and that they can hold onto what makes them unique, someone made in God's image.

Next, we must encourage our congregations to live their faith by loving their fellow man with the type of love that causes action — calling someone, writing a letter of encouragement or possibly buying groceries for an elderly neighbor. There are many things we could tell our congregation right now, but I think if we focus on hope and love, we will make it through as a people who are not only surviving, but are better off than when this began.

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Rabbi Dahlia Bernstein

Congregation Beth Ohr, Bellmore

People need faith leaders to take the call in the middle of the night from a congregant whose loved one has passed away, when only two weeks ago they were healthy. They need us to help them mourn as they struggle to find closure when they could not even hold the hand of their father, mother, sibling or friend when they were dying.

We need to give language to the an-

guish we all feel and to remind each soul of personal and communal resilience in times of crisis; to call on ancient stories to remind them of our collective confinement and eventual liberation. Faith leaders need to be matchmakers between those who cannot shop for themselves and those who are able. As it says in the Passover Haggadah, "All who are hungry, come and eat."

We need to offer some normalcy through prayers that do not change whether on Zoom or in person. As a rabbi, I try furiously to write a sermon that might offer some connection and understanding. But people mostly need us to pick up the phone and check in. They need us and we need them for direction, for strength and for purpose.

DO YOU HAVE QUESTIONS you'd like Newsday to ask the clergy? Email them to LLife@newsday.com. Find more LI Life stories at newsday.com/LLife.

calendarwatch

TODAY

CATHOLIC FAITH NETWORK

ROCKVILLE CENTRE: See website for schedule of daily masses from Santa Marta Chapel, Rome; St. Agnes Cathedral, Rockville Centre; St. Patrick's Cathedral, Manhattan; and La Santa Misa, Rockville Centre. Optimum channel 29/137. Verizon FiOS TV channel 296. Spectrum channel 162/471.free. catholicfaithnetwork.org.

ONLINE WORSHIP

MOUNT SINAI: Online worship to keep strong in your faith in these times. Find comfort and hope in the body of Christ. youtube.com, Crossover Christian Church, 10 a.m. Heritage Community Center, 633 Mount Sinai Coram Rd., free, crossoverchristianchurch.com, 631-734-0204.

ONLINE DAILY MASS

ROCKVILLE CENTRE: Virtual masses available at stagnescathedral.org or www.cfntv.org. Daily Mass (Monday-Friday) 8:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m., Sunday Mass at 11 a.m., 7 p.m., Agnes Cathedral, 29 Quealy Place, free, stagnescathedral.org, 516-766-0205.

ONLINE DAILY MASSES

HICKSVILLE: See website or "Facebook/Saint Ignatius Loyola Parish-Hicksville NY," 11 a.m. Sunday, noon Monday-Thursday, St. Ignatius Loyola Parish, Hicksville, 129 Broadway, free, stignatiushicksville.org, 516-931-0056.

ONLINE PRAYER

STONY BROOK: Go to Zoom.us 5 minutes before start time. Each 30-minute service includes prayers, readings, and reflections on the Gospel. Meeting ID 8675871768, 8 a.m. and 9 a.m., Sunday, All Souls' Episcopal Church, 61 Main St., free, allsouls-stonybrook.org, 631-655-7798.

ONLINE WORSHIP

MOUNT SINAI: Facebook Mt. Sinai Congregational, United Church of Christ or youtube.com Mt. Sinai Congregational Church, UCC, 10 a.m. Sunday Mt. Sinai Congregational United Church of Christ, 233 N. Country Rd., free, msucc.org, 631-473-1582.

SUNDAY ONLINE SERVICES

LAKE RONKONKOMA: Sunday online services are prerecorded and available on website and Facebook page

the morning before. holycross-lutheran.org; Search Facebook for Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Lake Ronkonkoma, 307 Hawkins Avenue, free, holycross-lutheran.org, 631-588-9509.

VIRTUAL SERVICES

FARMINGDALE: Virtual services, 9:30 a.m., zoom.us. Meeting ID 3668856897. Password 981708, 7 p.m. Farmingdale United Methodist Church, 407 Main St., free, farmingdaleumc.org, 516-694-3424.

VIRTUAL SERVICES

MANORVILLE: See website or Facebook page for virtual services, OurLadyoftheisland.com, facebook.com/OurLady-OfTheIsland, Shrine of Our Lady of the Island, 258 Eastport Manor Rd., free, 631-325-0661.

VIRTUAL SERVICES

LAWRENCE: See website for schedule of virtual services, (click Virtual JCC Resources, click Zoom classes), 9 a.m. Saturday Congregation Beth Shalom, 390 Broadway, free, guraljcc.org, 516-569-6733.

MEETING ONLINE?

Is your house of worship holding online gatherings? We want to help you stay connected. Please email events to events@newsday.com and ann.smukler@newsday.com and be sure to include a phone number so we may contact you. Events must be open to the public to be listed.

ONLINE SERVICES

EAST MORICHES: Online services 9 a.m. every Sunday at www.southbaychurchli.org/livestream or www.facebook.com/southbaychurchli/. Also, midweek online prayer meeting 7 p.m. Wednesdays. South Bay Bible Church, 578 Montauk Hwy, southbaybiblechurchli.org, 631-909-8241.

— COMPILED BY ANN DONAHUE-SMUKLER