

**NAME**

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**START OF TRANSCRIPT**

**[00:00:00]**

The following is a message from Wellsprings Congregation.

**[00:00:06]**

Hi, everybody, I am.

**[00:00:11]**

I want to share a little bit of a different kind of message this week, and maybe you can tell it's a little different already if you're paying close attention because I'm in my soft clothes.

**[00:00:25]**

I did that on purpose.

**[00:00:28]**

I want to share a message about going easy on ourselves and on each other. I am actually hoping that this message feels a little bit like a hug, the kind of hug that we can't give each other in person these days. I don't want to challenge us too much today. I don't want to push us to see what is inspirational about the times that we're living in this week. I want us to take 15, 20 minutes to just be where we are. To give ourselves that gift, I want you to know that that is OK to do that, it's OK to be where we are and it's OK that all of us are going through a lot. We are spent. Many of us.

**[00:01:30]**

Lost many of us are feeling a sort of emotional whiplash. I think at times I saw a little graphic online with a cycle with somebody going through, you know, the top of the cycle. I feel sad about the state of the world.

**[00:01:46]**

So then I turn off the news and I watch, you know, funny TV shows and I scroll around and look at funny means and then I laugh.

**[00:01:54]**

And then I feel guilty because I know that people are struggling. And then I watch the news and it just keeps going like that. That is confusing.

**[00:02:05]**

That feeling of emotional whiplash, that feeling that we are not sure how to feel even.

**[00:02:13]**

And that disconnects us from how we do feel in the moment. It's hard and it's OK that it's hard. It is the most normal thing in the world to feel this way right now in the midst of something that is unlike anything we've ever experienced before. So much of our energy right now just goes to living, to getting through the day and this completely topsy turvy, upside down kind of place. So much of our energy goes to just making it through and we have less energy for the other things that we are used to be able to do.

**[00:03:03]**

The service today, this Sunday. This is our sixth online service. We've done six of these. And when all this started, I actually started kind of using a shorthand that I kept in mind.

**[00:03:18]**

I was thinking early on in mid-March about what we will do as a community at Wellsprings. And I was making plans for keeping our community engaged and connected over time. And I had some good ideas and I heard some good

ideas from other people. And I knew that some of those ideas would take longer to do and they would be more challenging for us to figure out and implement. And so the shorthand I started using was we'll do that in week seven. That's a that's a week 7 idea. I said more than once to a handful of people.

**[00:03:52]**

And now next week is week 7. I had this feeling back then that by week seven we would need something fresh.

**[00:04:07]**

We would need a new boost, a jolt of something, some kind of new encouragement. In hindsight, I think I was pretty close this week. I do feel something turning in our community and in our country. I think we have some encouraging turning that's happening. I see signs that what we are doing is working.

**[00:04:42]**

I see how the worst case scenario projections are not where we are. I see on the news that in Philadelphia here where I live, we are not at maximum capacity for our hospital beds, which is good news. I see that in many places the climb of new infections is starting to level.

**[00:05:07]**

Those are such good signs of something turning.

**[00:05:13]**

But I also see another kind of turning beginning to emerge. And it's just the signs of how hard this has been on all of us. I see the signs that all of these plans for short term economic stimulus are starting to run out. I see that there are people who are beginning to talk less about solidarity and coming together and saving lives and more about who is to blame, our feelings of frustration and sadness and confusion. We've been here with us now for six weeks.

**[00:05:57]**

And I see that some of us are beginning to ask how long, how much longer, how long will we be living like this?

**[00:06:12]**

If you have been asking that you are not alone. Nearly everyone I talked to is asking that.

**[00:06:22]**

And I think we're asking because none of us knows the answer yet. We are desperate to find someone who does.

**[00:06:33]**

My friends Ben and Sarah, I've talked about them before, they're neighbors of mine. Ben and I grew up together and I know I've talked about their daughter. They have a little girl named Sidney who is, believe it or not, five now.

**[00:06:47]**

The other day, Ben shared a little slice of their family's reality on Facebook.

**[00:06:56]**

It might sound familiar to some of you. He said the little ones are so angry right now about all of the know in their lives.

**[00:07:12]**

No friends, no school, no park, no everything.

**[00:07:19]**

And how could they possibly be expected, he says, to express that anger in any way other than lashing out at us as parents?

**[00:07:31]**

He says it's it's all of the disappointment of being a kid in normal times with even less of the agency, less of those few things that we have control over. He closed his little post by saying this thought was brought to you by forty five minutes of being screamed at over nothing. The little ones are so angry about all of them know in their lives.

**[00:08:04]**

I think the big ones are, too.

**[00:08:08]**

No friends, no school, no park, no everything we can know as mature adults that this is all for the common good and we can know that we are helping and that it's worth it.

**[00:08:27]**

And we can know that it's possible to manage.

**[00:08:30]**

Right, that we are making it work, that we are finding ways to stay connected, that we are finding ways to feel a

sense of purpose and support each other and find joy and beauty and laughter in all of the ways that we can. And it can still be hard. We can still feel all those things and have that question right behind it.

**[00:08:57]**

So for how long will we be doing this?

**[00:09:04]**

Is this is this like another six weeks we're talking? I'm starting to hear people say, right. Or is it 12 weeks or is it six months a year? We're we're asking ourselves and each other, right. Do I need to adjust to some other new normal in this time, or is it going to be just like this? Are we going to be going back and forth between what this feels like and some other thing?

**[00:09:35]**

What is coming? Right.

**[00:09:38]**

Just tell me whatever it is, at least just tell me so I can prepare and I can figure out how I'm gonna make it through.

**[00:09:48]**

And no one can. No one can tell us. Not yet.

**[00:09:58]**

It's so frustrating and it's so hard.

**[00:10:03]**

There's a UU minister who is a good friend of mine.

**[00:10:08]**

Molly, the Reverend Molly House Gordon. She serves a congregation in the Midwest. And Molly is also a mom. She has two little girls. And she wrote this reflection last week comparing this feeling that we have to being in labor with her kids because she says it's it's the open endedness. Right. That really makes this impossible. In some ways, not only is it hard in this moment, we also have no idea how to manage our expectations in childbirth. She says it feels a lot like that. She says it is already too hard. It's too hard. In every moment and every moment of childbirth, she says, we are thinking. I don't know how much longer I can do this. And no one can tell us how much longer it will be. The baby is born when the baby is born.

**[00:11:25]**

She says, for me, that meant that I had to let go. I had to let go of thinking that way.

**[00:11:36]**

And instead she said I had to just focus on breathing through for five more minutes. I would breathe through for five more minutes of labor and then maybe in five minutes I could start again right where I was and keep breathing for another five minutes.

**[00:12:04]**

Molly says, So many people who have birthed babies or not, she says so many people I know have described that same strategy to me in their own words for other impossible hard experiences in their lives, whether it was getting through a terrible illness, living with an illness, living with loss, grieving the strategy, she says, of just doing the very next right thing.

**[00:12:38]**

How long is it really overwhelming question?

**[00:12:45]**

And it's a beautiful and honest question. Many of us might know of one of the songs that begins with that question, some 13.

**[00:12:59]**

It's one of the tehillim in Judaism. It's a song of David in the Old Testament of the Bible. And it starts with that question repeated four times throughout a short little piece of poetry.

**[00:13:13]**

How long? How long? How long? How long?

**[00:13:24]**

When we ask this question, we are allowing space for Lament..

**[00:13:33]**

Lament., which is a spiritual practice as old as those scriptures are, as old as that song, as old as human beings. For thousands of years, people who feel lost or angry or scared have asked, how long will I feel this way?

**[00:13:53]**

How long will this go on?

**[00:13:58]**

These spiritual practices, whether they are prayers or songs of lamentation, whether they are grief jars, where we write little notes and keep them in a little jar on our mantle, whether they are journals where we write out our sadness, whether they are connections with trusted friends, the kind that allow us space to share what's wrong without trying to fix it or make it go away.

**[00:14:25]**

These are all sacred practices that make room for lament when Lament. is the next right thing, when all inside of us can do nothing but ask that question, how long?

**[00:14:44]**

Even in our society, you know, even in America, with all of our can do productivity and our white picket fence, smiling family, Disneyfied ideals in our culture, we even then tend to make room for lament at certain times.

**[00:15:03]**

In the end of life, we will make room for a moment. We will make that space in hospitals and at grave sides and at funerals and memorial services. But we forget sometimes or at least I forgot until I read Molly's story, that we also will make space for lament. at birth.

**[00:15:30]**

A birthing parent will cry out in pain and no one will tell them to be quiet. Right. Not if they.

**[00:15:42]**

Not if they fear for their life. A birthing parent cries out in pain.

**[00:15:46]**

And we understand that that is natural and normal in that space. No one will tell them that things aren't really that bad. All things considered. Those cries and screams and groans are honored. And respected.

**[00:16:09]**

They're necessary for a new life to be born.

**[00:16:16]**

Reverend Molly says you do not have to figure out this whole pandemic thing.

**[00:16:25]**

You can't, at least not on your own. She says you just have to live through the next hour and then the next one and then the next one.

**[00:16:41]**

Things will change and they will keep changing. She says one hour might be worse and one hour might be better, and one day we will live into a time when the better hours pile and stack up on top of each other.

**[00:17:02]**

And that day we might declare this challenge past. But until then, my friends.

**[00:17:12]**

She says just keep taking another breath and then another and then another.

**[00:17:23]**

This message series, excuse me that we are now winding down from it was all about friendships and connections. Being a friend, right? Not finding a friend, you know, not just in that sense of going out and making friends, but being one ourselves.

**[00:17:46]**

And it's funny now to look back some of my suggestions from earlier in this message series about how to do that, how to be a friend.

**[00:17:55]**

They don't make much sense anymore. Right.

**[00:17:58]**

Spending time in coffee shops and making small talk with strangers and go into the park to pet dogs. A million miles away right now.

**[00:18:08]**

But thinking about who we want to be and what connections we want to nurture.

**[00:18:16]**

Right now, that's more relevant than ever.

**[00:18:23]**

And I think one of the most powerful ways that we can be a friend to ourselves and to others in this time is to find ways that we can be with our questions and our uncertainty. To find ways that we can allow ourselves to honor our lament and the lamentations of the people we love. To honor the lament we see in the world right now.

**[00:19:04]**

The people who might be complete strangers to us. But who we know are struggling with their own fears and their own uncertainties.

**[00:19:18]**

I think of that birthing parent and how intuitively we respect those cries.

**[00:19:28]**

It's amazing to me what just that practice of making space for Lament. will do to our sense of respect for and connection to each other. We might not be so quick to interrupt with that certainty that we know what's best. We might not rank pain so easily deciding that one person's struggle is more significant to us than another one's.

**[00:20:00]**

We might find more room in our hearts than we knew was there. More space than we thought we had capacity for.

**[00:20:13]**

These times have disoriented us and they have disturbed all the things that we thought were for sure.

**[00:20:22]**

Which means that we can be read oriented. We can be friendlier with ourselves and with each other as we move through this. It really is possible.

**[00:20:41]**

One little breath. One moment, one hour at a time.

**[00:20:50]**

I think some of you will remember this beautiful little illustration that we've used at Wall Springs more than once. I know Reverend Ken's preached on it. I think I have to. It's from the children's book author Dallas Clayton, and I'm afraid to put it in the video because I'm personally still terrified of the YouTube copyright robots. And I don't want them shutting us down. But we will link a picture of this into the chat and maybe the video description below.

**[00:21:20]**

It's that illustration with a little crescent moon on the side and then a list that says three things.

**[00:21:31]**

1 We are in space. 2 no one knows what's going on. I love you. When has that ever felt more true?

**[00:21:49]**

We're dealing with a new unprecedented virus that no one knows how to cure. None of us has ever lived in this time or place before. And no one knows how long this will last.

**[00:22:02]**

That's the reality. No one knows what's going on. But you are not lost. You are right here with us in space.

**[00:22:18]**

If you don't know what to think or feel, if you don't know what to do, if you are tired of the choice to go to all the taking on life or death significance.

**[00:22:29]**

If you are disoriented by news that cheers you up in one moment and brings you down and the next, then you are doing it right.

**[00:22:38]**

Reality is disorienting. If you feel that way, then you are in touch with reality. And you're in great company because that means that your heart is open to all that you see. And it is hard.

**[00:23:00]**

But I know that even though it's hard, I am not ready to give up, not on myself or on you or on us. I might do things more slowly in this time, I might make mistakes. I might not know the answer. I might be in soft clothes even more than usual, but I would rather stay in touch with reality.

**[00:23:41]**

I would rather stay in touch with what's real for people than I would press on with a false kind of certainty.

**[00:23:52]**

I would rather our community act out of love and care as best as we can and just try to do the next right thing. We could do so much worse than to have extra compassion right now for ourselves and for each other. So if this feeds that well for you of self-compassion, of compassion for the people around you today, then I think we've done our job. I think we've lived up to our mission for these last 20 minutes. Our souls connected and brought together for a moment into something more whole. We're honest. Let's start asking how long can we do that?

**[00:24:59]**

Here together and each of us. In our own ways. Amen. And may you live in blessing.

**[00:25:15]**

I invite you to take a moment now to join me in the spirit of prayer.

**[00:25:24]**

God of our hearts.

**[00:25:28]**

Source of all living things.

**[00:25:36]**

Help us remember these days that we were doing the best we can.

**[00:25:44]**

Help us have compassion for our aching bodies and our cluttered houses in our foggy brains. Help us have compassion for our broken and hurting and healing and open hearts.

**[00:26:04]**

May we remember to keep an eye out to look for the things that help us remember, we are so beloved that our beloved ness in this faith is inherent.

**[00:26:19]**

It is our birthright.

**[00:26:22]**

It's big enough and holy and magical enough that love to be ours and everyone else's at the same time. How does it do that?

**[00:26:34]**

A love so big that it is the closest thing perhaps some of us can imagine to the very heart of God.

**[00:26:47]**

And just like gravity, just like the atmosphere, just like the stars and the space above us, it can hold us all.

**[00:27:01]**

For the prayers that I've spoken and for the prayers that each of the people watching us carrying on their hearts. We say amen.

**[00:27:12]**

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**END OF TRANSCRIPT**



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