



Community Support(ed)

Bentley de Bardelaben-Phillips
Executive Associate, JLCM

Many of the “Witness for Justice” opinion editorials authored by our team take a form of advocacy, protest, and/or witness to highlight an injustice in some corner of our global community. Often, it is a clarion call to the members our churches, as well as to our neighbors in town squares across our nation, to make a demand or take a stand alongside those who cry out for equity from our institutions and people, public and private.

However, I am going to veer away from that formula now. In today’s message I will simply offer my gratitude to the many people working behind the scenes. To that end, let me begin...

For nearly eighteen months, each of us have had to live with the various ways in which the coronavirus has impacted, and continues to impact, our lives, whether emotionally, financially, physically, and/or spiritually.

Certainly, among my family members, we suffered significant losses in each of those areas, including loss of life. Even now, many are trying to rebound. Take, for example, my mom and how she attempted to weather through this pandemic in total isolation. She was eighty-one (then), is widowed, living on a small, fixed income, and in fair health.

Pre-covid, she was able to get around daily on her own or with the use of her “rollator”. She played bingo twice a week with her girlfriends. She regularly participated in activities at the senior center a few times a week. She even faithfully went to church on most Sundays.

Unfortunately, eighteen months later, at the age of eighty-two, she is a mere shell of the woman described above.

While she sat alone in her small one-bedroom apartment, day after day, obeying the many local, state, and federal mandates asking folk to stay home, the muscles

in her body and mind began to slowly atrophy.

Today, she can barely walk from one room to the next in her apartment. Her mental and emotional health has also deteriorated from not having the regular stimuli previously provided by her community of friends, family, and neighbors.

Although she had a telephone, a television, and a computer to keep her connected to the outside world, the outside world became disconnected from her. The lack of any personal touch, few to no energetic exchanges from other humans, as well as not having anyone to affirm her unique existence in the world resulted in her swift and sharp decline.

Currently, she is diligently working to regain some of her lost functionality, which is taking its own toll on her. Still, she is determined. My family, her pastor, and a handful of home healthcare aids are assisting her in that endeavor. The community supporting her recovery at its finest.

And it is going to take the support of her community to provide her with what she needs to regain some of what she lost during the lockdown. I am not sure a full recovery is possible for her, but she is trying. Besides, she has a cabin reserved to take a cruise to the Bahamas next summer. Prayerfully, nothing is going keep her from getting on that boat.

For all these many efforts provided going forth in support of her well-being, I am very grateful. To the frontline workers and family members who show up to do what is needed, required, and more, THANK YOU from the bottom of my heart!

My mom, and all patients like her as well as their loved ones, deeply appreciate all you do to make our lives a little less hectic. May your karmic return be as generous with you as you have been with others.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bentley deBardelaben-Phillips is the Executive Associate for Justice and Local Church Ministries for the United Church of Christ.

LEARN ucc.org/justice

DONATE ucc.org/donate

ARCHIVE
WFJ bit.ly/witness4justice

The United Church of Christ has more than 5,000 churches throughout the United States. Rooted in the Christian traditions of congregational governance and covenantal relationships, each UCC setting speaks only for itself and not on behalf of every UCC congregation. UCC members and churches are free to differ on important social issues, even as the UCC remains principally committed to unity in the midst of our diversity.