Spiritual Malpractice

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At this writing, over 166,000 people have lost their lives in the past seven
months to covid-19 in the United States according to the Centers of Disease and
Prevention (CDC). Let that sit with you for a moment. Mothers, fathers, sisters,
brothers, siblings, cousins, spouses, children, friends, doctors, nurses, fire fighters,
EMT first responders, police officers, teachers, pastors, performers, field and
package workers, restaurant workers, grocery store employees, and the list goes
on of precious loved ones lost. Over 5 million have been infected by the corona
virus in this country so far.

Healthdata.org estimates that by December 1st of 2020 over 295,000 lives
will be lost in the U.S. An additional 129,000+ souls to perish from now until
the beginning of December. Health care experts and scientists all agree that
face masks, preferably made of cloth, hand washing, physical distancing and
avoiding close contact gatherings especially indoors, are the best ways to prevent
contracting the corona virus.

Yet the wearing of face masks has become a symbol of weakness by some
political and religious leaders. Some pastors have encouraged congregational
members to attend indoor worship services while stating that if we truly believe
in God, God will protect us from the disease. Thereby suggesting that contracting
covid-19 is a sign of retribution for a lack of faith.

In the Christian Gospel there is an account of Jesus’ encounter with the evil one,
during his time in the wilderness. The evil one mocked Jesus’ relationship with
the Divine. He challenged Jesus stating that if he really is the son of God to throw
himself off the cliff for God’s angels to save him. Jesus’ reply was quick, “‘It is said,
‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” (Lk 4:12 NRSV) In short, Jesus’ did not
have to prove his faith for the benefit of another.

It is an important object lesson for us to remember that we possess the God given
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.