

Family of Faith,

Phew! How much has shifted in our world in just a few short weeks, even days. And we continue to get new information and things continue to change. The actions we take now, we take not because the world is ending (although it might feel like that at times!), but to affirm and support life, and health, for our whole community, not just ourselves. We are invited to pause, and not panic. But oh, it hurts, doesn't it?

Many of us are grieving the loss of things we have been planning for—vacations, time with family in other places, parties, theater and sporting events.

We at Christ are grieving the temporary loss of time spent physically together, in our sanctuary.

And we are grieving the plans we had for Holy Week and Easter celebrations—we may yet be together, but without time for preparation, our liturgies will not happen the way we had hoped.

We are in a stressful time, as parents adjust to balancing a changing work schedule while kids are home full time, kids struggle to learn new ways to use their time, and we care for our elders when we may not even be able to visit them right now.

We are in an anxious time, wondering if we or someone we love may get ill, wondering if we will have what we need in a time when our economy is suffering and employment is impacted in different ways. We face unknown circumstances few of us are prepared for.

And we are in a lonely time, as we are invited to keep physical distance. For the good purpose of allowing our medical professionals to care for those who are sick and keep ourselves and those around us healthy, but still. A lonely time.

And yet, all around me, I see evidence that we are not alone. Our men's group is preparing to reach out and support those who need it. Our youth team is going to provide Sunday School lessons each week for families to use. We will worship together. Not the way we are used to, and it will feel a little clunky and confusing, but we will worship together.

We are continuing to be the church, in new and creative and perhaps unexpected ways. We are here for one another, caring for one another, staying connected to one another as best we can.

I am reminded of so many people in scriptures who entered into unknown territory. And among them, the story of Esther stands out in the last few days. Esther, a Jewish woman, taken without much choice to live as the wife of the king, finds that her people are going to be arrested, and killed. She herself is not at risk, being the wife of the king. But oh, her people. And she feels helpless, and afraid, powerless to do anything to help. And here comes Mordecai. And as Esther wrestles with whether or not to speak, to challenge, to act, he asks her: **What if you are here for such a time as this?**

My family of faith, indeed. **What if we are here for such a time as this?** We are invited in this Lenten Season, in this season of COVID-19, to ask ourselves this question. And then, seek ways that we can bring the good news of God to one another, to our children, to our neighbors, and family, and friends.

So much in this world can pull us apart, and tries, constantly, doesn't it? And now we face a situation designed, it seems, to do just that. But it doesn't have to. Already, we are pulling not apart, but together. We are re-imagining worship, re-imagining pastoral care, re-imagining Sunday School, reimagining what it means to be church. And it takes all of us to do that.

We will not be torn apart. In our grief, in our loneliness, in our anxiety, in our stress, we hold one another close in prayer and love. We see each other, perhaps more clearly than we usually do. We offer one another, and ourselves, more grace than usual, not less.

And at the end of it all, we will celebrate together all of the ways we have been church. All of the ways we have encountered God in this most unusual time. All of the parties we will plan when we are physically together again.

If you need something, ask. If you have something to share, offer. We are not alone. We are in this together. **We are here, for just such a time as this.**

Staying Connected

If you would like to offer support and connection to those who will need to be without visitors right now, you can send letters, or cards, or even pictures. Please contact Carolyn or me and we will provide you with the information you need.

Zoom Fellowship

Join me for a time to share concerns, questions, needs, hopes, and joys, and pray together. I will convene a Zoom Fellowship time every Tuesday at 12pm, and every Thursday at 5pm. You can access this by computer, smart phone, or even landline phone! If you are interested in joining, please let me know, and I will send you the invitation, and I will also post it in Facebook every week.

How to Talk to your Children

Here is a good resource I found for talking with children about what is happening right now. And parents, know you will be receiving materials each week for a simple Sunday School activity to do at home.

<https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/how-to-talk-to-your-kids-about-coronavirus>