

COLLOQUIES with Pastor Brian

Dear CHURCH,

Never have I written this title more appropriately. For the church is not a building, it is a people. And today, the church exists wherever you are found. For those still serving in purposeful and essential places in our community, you have our thanks and gratitude. For those sheltering in place to protect people you'll never know, thank you for your humility and servant hearts. And for those honest in their bewilderment of disrupted patterns, habits and concerns, bless you. For you... and all of us... are inheriting the kingdom of God.

I do not believe God gave us this virus. Please hear me on this. This virus can hurt, kill and maim the things that God considers sacred. This virus targets those already vulnerable and exploits their weakness. This is one of the things that God and our scriptures are clear upon; God considers creation a sacred event and humankind's creation is special in these regards. And along with this, Jesus prioritizes caring for the weak, the sick, the poor, the vulnerable. IF we are caught caring for these brothers and sisters, we care directly for Jesus.

God doesn't want us to suffer needlessly. Yet since the fall of creation (and through the actions of humankind again and again), God tries to keep us from being selfish and we warp out and assume our worst characteristics. And God works to save. We suffer the arrows we inflict upon ourselves and others, but God is in the New Kingdom, trying to make our way better all the time. Leading us toward our best selves of loving God fully and loving others. So while we say clearly, "The virus is NOT God's will," we can also say "God is with us in this time."

While the onslaught of the virus is upon us, we can name its wrongness AND work to make things better. This is why we are following our Bishop's invitation to discontinue worship at our congregation building and to keep others (and ourselves) safe by following the best practices we know to still worship AND make our world better. God didn't create this situation, but God can be present WITH US in this and all struggles. God can also be IN US as we reach out to continue God's work in worshipping, sharing our gifts, praying and studying, doing Good (God) deeds and by being present and singing with one another.

We haven't stopped. This week, over 100 people joined us online for some or all of worship. Did you invite someone to join us? Thank you! Could you still invite someone? Heck yes!

Some of us have been visited by the Northwood MerryMakers who attempted to juggle, sing and dance (with a ... mop?) to make us laugh/cry with joy. Some of us have been calling and texting one another to see how each of us are doing. Some of us have interacted in the Friday/Saturday prayer train as it rolled on Facebook. And some of us even got together in GoogleHangouts to laugh, meet and just say "I miss you" to one another. I'm told others are checking mail; while others are counting tithes and others still paying our bills while we never stop being CHURCH. God is still with us and we are God's people.

Yes, lots of things are changing. It is okay to be stressed at this time. It is okay to be overwhelmed. But we never stop being loved by God and being the ones called to love others. Maybe someone near you needs to hear the person they think has it all together feels strung out? Maybe someone just needs a call to see how they are doing? If God brings someone to mind, act on it. Because we are all in this together.

God didn't do this, but you and I can certainly profess that God is in the midst of this, holding us and others together. How can we use these moments to witness to God's saving power and enact God's grace and mercy with others?

I hope you'll keep each other and myself on your shortlist of people to call for any reason (or no reason at all) and know we are more than ready to be present with you. For you are the CHURCH.

With peace and affection,

Brian