

March 24, 2020



**First  
Presbyterian  
Church**

371 E. Court St.  
Kankakee, IL  
60901  
(815) 939-3546

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I am a “lectionary” preacher, you know that of me, and for the most part that has seemed to be a faithful and effective way of guiding and grounding our shared worship.

Ten days or so ago when the seriousness of what is before us began to become undeniably apparent to me, I was without words. I could not begin to wrap my head around what this was, what it meant, and how to move forward. As you may well know or can imagine, this is especially a problem for one whose entire call is rooted in finding and speaking words — words which comfort, words which motivate, words which call to account, words which ground us in hope. And while I still find myself back there at times and I expect I will continue to at times before we find ourselves in a new and different place, I did hear some meaningful and helpful direction from one who had been there before. You might want to spend a few minutes with Pastor Matthew Crebbin’s reflections in a blog post written a few days ago: *Lessons from Ministry in the Midst of a Disaster*. You won’t be sorry. Here Pastor Crebbin reminds us to tell the stories. In particular, he references the Exodus story as especially meaningful in the midst of a disaster.

Fear is catching. I have certainly seen this in my own community where for the last ten days, grocery store shelves are emptying faster than those who stock them can possibly keep up. How has fear made itself visible where you are?

Have you seen signs of life despite that fear?

I have also seen amazing signs of life, especially in places where people have heard the call to care for the most vulnerable among us. For instance, I see it in several places in town where



the schools have mobilized to continue to provide free ‘to-go’ lunches and breakfasts for hungry children. I have seen it in an abundance of support for our food pantries which have previously depended on an older population to volunteer, now being helped by younger folks whose time has been freed up and who are giving back in this way. And yes, we have all seen it in public health workers and in medical personnel who step into and beyond their own fear and keep showing up and doing what they always do to bring healing to the sick and comfort and hope to those who are afraid.

We live in a state which is now on ‘stay at home’ orders by our governor. For many of us, such an order brings with it enforced loneliness and perhaps a loss of meaning as we wonder who we are and who we are called to be in a world where we cannot be and do things as we always have done them.

But it is more than that, it seems to me. For even as we are physically apart, we can look for other ways to help life flourish. It may be in simple ways like picking up the phone to call or dropping an actual note in the mail (or yes, a text or an email) to someone else in a similar circumstance or worse. It may mean spending more intentional time in prayer for loved ones and strangers alike. And yes, it may mean, in these first days of spring, spending part of a sunny day outside, raking away the dregs of winter and being reminded that life and hope are still right here at our fingertips. Life and hope which not only sustains us but can also be passed along to others.

And through it all, we do so know that God is always on the side of life. And we seek to live lives which give evidence that this is so.

What might this look like for you in a strange and too often frightening time?



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In a time when we are forced to do things in new and different ways, how else might we live into the same life filled purpose to which we have been called?

Like all of us here on the ground, I surely cannot see into the future. However, it is my strong sense that we will find ourselves here in this in between place for some time. I am so very grateful for all of you as we join together, trying to see our way into next steps together. Please take a moment to let me know how you are and what this time is bringing to you, what you are grateful for, what you find you need, and what you are learning along the way.

Thank you to Rev. Dr. Janet Hunt for her words of inspiration that inspired me to write this to you.

In Christ's Name,

Pastor Karen



