



“I am convinced that there is nothing in death or life, in the realm of spirits or superhuman powers, in the world as it is or the world as it shall be, in the forces of the universe, in heights or depths – nothing in all creation that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

~ Romans 8:36-39

For yet another weekend, we have been unable to gather together in person for worship. As of March 20th, there were over 5,000 COVID-19 cases in New York State alone and we have yet to reach peak levels of those who are or will be infected in the weeks to come. For most of us, there has never been anything like this in our lifetime. Our highways are plastered with digital signs pleading with us to “stay home – save lives.” While that is sound advice and must be heeded, it runs counter to everything we have ever known about the One we follow – Jesus; the One poured out in love for the sake of the world.

Even the name of our church is a reminder that God has never remained socially distant from the world He loves. Our name stands as a reminder that when life was at its low point, God, in Jesus, put on our flesh to become one of us; with all of our weaknesses and vulnerabilities.

As our church name implies, we are an enfleshed community; there is nothing virtual about us. And yet “virtual” is a word that has come to characterize life around Incarnate Word as we have learned to live in the midst of the Coronavirus pandemic. Don’t get me wrong, I truly appreciate being able to spend quality time with my family in the safety of my home, but I have to say I miss each of you immensely. I miss seeing you in Sunday morning worship. I miss our conversations at Fellowship hour and at various times throughout the week. I miss being able to serve alongside you at Mustard Seed Kitchen, REACH House, or the Homeless Outreach.

Though I know neither what the roadmap will look like, nor the length of the journey, I know these times will pass and we will find ourselves together again

.

In the coming weeks, I intend to stay as connected as possible while honoring the need for all of us to adhere to the safety precautions of social distancing. In addition to reaching out to our homebound members with weekly phone calls, I will offer opportunities for us to come together by video/audio conferencing using Zoom. From “virtual” coffee shop hours to occasional Bible Studies, I am looking forward to connecting with you, sharing a laugh, shedding some tears and everything in-between.

In the meantime, as I’m sure you have already been doing, continue to check in with one another by phone or by email. These times in which we live not only contain the potential to be frightening, but to be lonely as well. We may be isolated, but we are also connected. As siblings in Christ, we are inextricably connected to one another and to God. As followers of Christ, we extend those connections beyond our walls to the larger community around us. At this time, those who extend hospitality to the homeless through meals and shelter are in desperate need of the very same supplies of which we find ourselves in need. Places like REACH House, Eastern Service Workers Association, and House of Mercy are just a few places struggling to meet the needs of some of the most vulnerable among us.

Life around Incarnate Word may feel virtual right now, but it is not; it is real. As we have done so well in the past, may we continue to live into our name of Christ enfleshed in the world as we reach out in love to the neighbors we know and to the ones we don’t know.

Peace and Love,
Pastor Doug