

Wuhan, China??

I had never heard of Wuhan, China. Nobody had heard of Covid-19. Who knew that it would travel around the world and into our communities with such deadly consequences?



At first, I didn't think we would have to shut down churches. Then I didn't think the shutdown would last so long. Our big event had to be rescheduled for April 2021. Who knew we would have to cancel our Celtic Celebration at Crossroads on April 26, complete with Irish musicians and dancers and my Irish pastor friend from Carrickmacross?

I didn't realize how awkward video-taping for two months would be or how much I would miss congregational worship. It was strange returning to congregational worship in June, with masks, social distancing, overflow seating and other precautions. But it was exhilarating. Who knows how long the limitations on worship will continue?

Our Elder Board did not realize how challenging it would be to shut down the church and slowly reopen with safety guidelines in place. Kickback came from every side, especially masks or no masks. Who knew that recommended safety procedures would prove so controversial?

As a board, we weren't sure how to connect with everyone in our church family. We used the phone, Zoom meetings and careful visits to keep in contact. But plenty of people have fallen through the cracks. Who knows, after months at home watching services online in pajamas, when and how many people will return in person?

I did not understand how it would limit our family activities over the summer. We saw our son and his wife from Eau Claire about once a month, mostly outside and sometimes with masks. Our younger son and his wife motored from Nashville and vacationed a week at our house. Lori and I made two trips into Minnesota for a niece's graduation party and an aunt's funeral service. Who knew we would be spending so much time at home?

While a number of people have been tested, no one from our congregation has contracted the disease. In our county, a small number of people have been hospitalized but no one has died from Covid-19. For this we are thankful.

We don't know when or how this pandemic will end. Predictions of a vaccine in November or December seem unrealistic. More likely they will roll out in January or February of 2021. Who knows if it will or people will have the trust to receive it?

The pandemic has forced me to realize how ignorant and unaware I am. As James 4:14 states, "You don't know what your life will be like tomorrow..." I am no prognosticator. My assumptions have fallen flat.

I can see that the pandemic has intensified the divisions tearing at our country, state and communities. Social media is filled with folks sparring over the pandemic, politics, protests, policing and more. The fabric of society appears to be ripping at the seams. Will the church of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ be pulling apart or together? Will we be burning or building bridges? Who knows if the church will expand the redeeming mercy and judgment, love and justice, grace and truth of God?

I don't know.

Here are some stirring thoughts from Tim Keller in an interview he did with Francis Collins for Biologos called, "Where is God in a pandemic?"

"All churches are going to have to get replanted. See, we don't even know who's there. When we reconvene, who will be there? I'm a church planter. I planted Redeemer and City to City, the organization I work with, helps new

churches get started across the city and it takes a lot of ingenuity. It takes tremendous focus on people outside the church. You can't ignore them. You have to say, what are the needs of our neighborhood? Secondly, it takes a tremendous amount of concentration on what are the needs of people inside the church, you can't just run programs, you know, and get up there and preach your sermon and draw your paycheck. You've got to meet needs inside, meet needs outside, and you've also got to be innovative. You've got to be thinking about the new situation and how do I maximize opportunities that come from this new situation? How do I minimize the disadvantages? That's how you plant a church. And unfortunately, I think all churches are going to have to get replanted. And we're all going to have to say, how do we meet needs inside, outside, and how do we respond to these changes? And that will be a test."

Pastor Wade Duroe

Crossroads Church, Chippewa Falls, WI

715-723-1054