

Greetings to the Saints of Mission Presbytery!

First of all, I want to thank all of you for your love, prayers, and expressions of sympathy through the illness, and now on the death, of my sister Susan. She died very peacefully in her sleep some time on Sunday morning, and we all see that as a blessing. I'm back in the office now, and will be going back up to Dallas for a family memorial service in a few weeks. My family and I have felt the prayers and support, and we are so grateful.

While I was up in the Metroplex, I was watching the news one evening with my sister Sara and her family one evening. We caught an interview with Ken Burns, who was being asked to reflect on our current state of affairs: Covid-19, the deaths of George Floyd and so many more, the removal of memorial statues, etc.

I love just about anything that Ken Burns touches (most lately his documentary on country music, which was fabulous). His perspective on history is fascinating and rich. But what really got my attention was when this perceptive historian said that ***we are now in the middle of one of the four worst crises in American life***: right up there with the Civil War, the Great Depression, and one other which I confess I can't remember right now.

Wow.

We knew that we were in the middle of a sea change. We've all seen it and felt it as our congregations have adapted to "the church leaving the building." We've all seen it and felt it as our predictions of Covid taking a break in the summer months have melted away. We may not be in the 2nd wave yet, but we in Texas have the grim distinction of being one of the three states leading the pack for an increase in infections and hospitalizations. No matter what national leaders may say, there's no denying what we are seeing on the ground.

Yes, I am missing my sister in particular right now. But all of us are dealing with grief upon grief as we go through this period. We're not just hunkering down during a pandemic; we are going through a sea change in our society and in our world. We are being forced to pioneer a new way of being.

I don't especially *want* to be any kind of "pioneer." But as My Beloved tells me, "we all have things we want." I've frequently said that if I was one of those who were crossing the prairie and settling the continent, I'd probably be lying somewhere on the side of the road near the first of the journey. We're not being given a choice right now. We're *all* being required to pioneer during this time. We may need to find ways to survive before

we find ways to thrive. But we can do it, if we help each other along the way. And we, as the Christian community, bring particular gifts with us on the trail.

One of the places that's marked up and dog-eared in my favorite Bible is Hebrews 11. It's times like these that we need to remember that our ancestors in the faith "shut the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness..." And then, in the encouragement we receive in recounting their stories, we are told: "let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the *pioneer* and perfecter of our faith.....so that you may not grow weary or lose heart." (Hebrews 11:32-12:3)

How about that. Jesus was a pioneer. So I guess we can be one too, with God's help.

Presbyter "Sightings" (as it were)

June 26-27 - meet with the first-ever Virtual General Assembly

June 28 - Preach for Kerrville First; ordination for Ezequiel Herrera in McAllen

June 30 - Post-GA meeting with Synod Presbyters and Stated Clerks; virtual gathering with the Victoria Region folks post-GA

July 2 - Meet with San Antonio region pastors; meet with Commissioned Pastor Task Force

July 3 - Office closed for the July 4 Holiday