Creativity Amid Chaos:
The Nebraska Corona Bible

One day, when you look back upon this season - what will you remember? Will you see the harrowing time it was for the world?

Or will you also see beautiful things: all the creative work that was being done, both large and small, by all kinds of people?

Will you remember being part of something extraordinary, something that spoke of beauty and hope in the midst of chaos?

Will you tell of a time when you together with the whole church and people of faith across Nebraska copied the whole Bible?

The idea is both daunting and intriguingly simply: people from all over our state each copy a chapter from the Bible in their own handwriting: as a means to stay connected, thus creating the "Nebraska Corona Bible," a powerful testimony to hope and connection in this time of crisis.

People have copied holy texts for centuries as a spiritual discipline. In monasteries, monks spent large parts of their days copying sacred scripture, lettering the text, illuminating it with illustrations, and commenting on its meaning. Writers share that writing has had a healing, liberating, centering effect. It connects us across time, and allows us to become part of a community.

In this COVID crisis, new technologies have been extraordinary tools to stay connected. At the same time, they have also heightened a very real “digital divide,” as people in some demographics felt excluded from community which suddenly almost exclusively takes place in an online world.

This is where the ancient tradition of copying the Bible comes in.

Our goal is to copy the whole Christian Bible, using individuals’ handwriting or calligraphy. For each of the 1,189 chapters of the biblical books of the Old and New Testament, we are looking for women and men, youth or children who commit to each copy a chapter. Contributors are also welcome to add a personal commentary and illustrations or artistic interpretations to their passage.

Thus, the Bible is re-created in light of our questions and fears, but also our hope and trust as a testimony to this time of crisis.

Please check out the website www.nebraskacoronabible.com and sign up today for your favorite text - and tell your friends all about it!

For questions, contact Pastor Thomas tdummermuth@eastridge.org

This project is inspired by the St. Gallen Coronabibel, a similar project in northeastern Switzerland. We are grateful to the initiator, Uwe Habenicht, for permission to adapt this idea to our Nebraska context.
April 27, 2020

Hello to all the friends and family members of Eastridge Presbyterian Church,

Last Friday, Governor Ricketts announced that beginning Sunday, May 4, houses of worship would be allowed to gather in certain counties. Following that announcement, at a daily press conference, Mayor Gaylor Baird emphasized that Lancaster is not one of the counties affected. In the days since, the discussion has been taken to the social media platforms. I’ve received many e-mails, messages and texts with helpful information. From the amount of information that has been passed on to me, I have gathered the following insight: no one really knows how this is going to go. What works in one area for one specific congregation may not work in another area for another congregation. So far, we seem to be largely left on our own to determine what will work for us. Honestly, I’m conflicted about this. It would be nice to have someone tell us how to continue to operate “out of an abundance of caution.” On the other hand, I appreciate the ability to discern what measures best apply to our congregation. The reality is this: no one has done this before on this scale, and no one knows how to do it best.

This is why I feel it’s important to communicate with you all regarding the guiding principles we have embraced and plans we have made for this time.

First, our guiding principles have been to nurture our relationships with God and each other during this time, to strive to be authentic and meaningful, and to build a foundation so we can adapt as the situation changes. Our immediate goal was to be able to stream worship from our sanctuary and our homes, and to provide devotional opportunities through our ongoing online devotional ministry, music devotions on our Facebook page, and weekly interactive prayer services that can also be found on our Facebook page.

Friends, we are committed to continuing these foundational pieces of our online presence for the foreseeable future. However, even once the crisis is past, we will continue with our online devotions, a ministry that has been active at Eastridge for over a decade; and we will continue to stream worship on a weekly basis. Recently, the worship and music and memorial and endowment committees both approved installation of the necessary cameras and other equipment.

When will we come back to worship in the sanctuary? I don’t know.

(continued on next page)
Of course, it is tempting to open the sanctuary as soon as we can for worship. However, there are many things for us to consider as we practice physical distancing in worship. Some of them are simple, and easy to be solved. I would imagine we will place offering boxes at the door, forgo handshakes on the way in and the way out, place bulletins to mark the proper distance for seating, move tables and chairs out of the Welcome Center so as to avoid gathering too close… even the challenge of communion and baptism are less daunting to me than the simple interactions I take for granted.

At the core of all these questions and challenges lies this simple truth: there is no vaccine and no cure for COVID-19. Until there is, gathering together puts everyone at risk. That’s why it is important for us to continue to act “out of an abundance of caution.”

At this point, we do know that there are some in the at-risk category who will continue to shelter in place and stay at home. For everyone’s safety, I encourage everyone to follow this guidance as much as possible. For now, we are safest as God’s people at home.

The session’s original action to close the church is in effect until May 11, 2020. I anticipate the next few weeks will be as “fluid” as the past two months. While we will continue to take the guidance of our Governor and Mayor, our session will be primarily concerned with the decisions that make the most sense for our congregation. Please know that the latest information regarding our congregation will continue to be posted on our website and Facebook page.

In the meantime, our staff has been busy! In May’s newsletter, I think you will be amazed at the creative and meaningful ministries we are planning for the next few months. Even when we cannot gather physically, we pray that God will “bind us together!”

~ Melodie Jones Pointon
**EASTRIDGE Presbyterian Church**

**Coronavirus Family Album fundraiser**

Working with Donna Gustafson from West Door Studios, families and individuals have an opportunity for a professional porch photo shoot for a $25 (includes tax) sitting fee. $20 will be divided equally to the youth fund and the choral scholar fund. Families and individuals will receive digital copies of the pictures from West Door Studios. The end result will be a sort of family album to remember these days! **Email the church office to schedule!**

**EPC Book Club:** Join us on Monday, May 11 via Zoom to discuss both April and May selections: *There, There* by Tommy Orange; and *The Moment of Lift* by Melinda Gates. Bring your ideas for next year’s selections to our May meeting!

Join us for worship Sundays at 10 am! You’ll find us at www.eastridge.org and our Facebook page!

**Communion Sunday is the first Sunday of the month!** Bring the bread and juice that you have as you prepare for worship.

Brian Lew, our music director, has been sharing **Musical Devotions on our Eastridge Facebook page** during this COVID-19 time. You can head to the page to view anytime after they are posted!

**Logging in to Access ACS:**

- Go to www.eastridge.org
- Click on “Member Weblinks” at the bottom left corner of the page. Then click on orange box that says ”Member Login”.
- Click on “Need a login? Click here”. This will ask you to add your email and name. You’ll create a login with a password, and can then log in anytime to this screen (below). It shows groups, your giving, a church directory, calendar, and available registrations: The ChurchLife app is for iPhones, and is basically the same information.
April 16, 2020
Dear Eastridge Church family,
Almost 67 years ago our family moved to Lincoln from Deshler, NE to begin and be part of a new congregation in the eastern suburb of Lincoln, which came to be known as Eastridge Church—you! You nurtured our spirits through Sunday school classes, youth groups, choirs, fellowship events, and worship in a “home” of love, compassion, forgiveness, and acceptance of all people. We flew the nest eventually, and traveled and settled far and wide, but the relationships that began in the Eastridge congregation have sustained and supported us through the hills and valleys of our individual lives. In short, you have been a large part in laying the foundation and helping us become who we are today, and we want to thank you for that legacy. And we will pray for Eastridge church to maintain and expand that foundation in the future for all who come through your doors and into your warm welcome.

Our love to you as you move forward in your ministry in the days to come. God’s blessings to you all.
Tom Huxtable, Jean Huxtable Hamersky, Paul Huxtable, Ann Huxtable-Scates

Eastridge Hospice Singers Update: Just like all other groups related to our community of faith, our “in person” hospice singing visits have been placed “on hold” for the time being. We are missing the opportunity to sing for our hospice clients in the place where they are receiving hospice care but are finding ways to virtually connect with each of them via FaceTime, Skype, Google Hangouts and Zoom. Naturally, visiting them this way isn’t “ideal” but our musical impact is still being experienced with blessings being felt on “both sides of the computer screen” and for that we are extremely thankful.

Once we are allowed to again visit hospice clients personally, feel free to contact Patty Niemann at epc.hospic.singers@gmail.com or 402-432-8353 or the church office at 402-488-7844 to request and schedule a singing visit for a family member or a friend who are in hospice care.

STILL COMING! Since a snowstorm cut into our original Lifetouch photography sessions, Lifetouch will allow those of you who couldn’t make it to your session another chance to be included in the Eastridge directory. We will have access to the sign up at Indian Hills Community Church makeup sessions. Due to the COVID-10 restrictions, this will happen at a later date. More info to come!

Talk Heart 2 Heart: Eastridge Faith Partners recommends this site for parents! www.talkheart2heart.org. There is a Facebook page as well.
A note from Georgann Roth, with the organization that helps to furnish volunteers for The Gathering Place:

Hi there!

It's been a while since my last email and we all here are Community Action have been thinking about you. We miss all of your smiling faces. I hope this email finds you well and finding your new groove. Last week was our annual Volunteer Recognition Week and Community Action celebrated all of our amazing volunteers Facebook. So many wonderful memories throughout 2019-2020. We hope you follow us on Facebook so you were able to see our outpouring of gratitude for all you've done and are continuing to do for us. If you missed it, check out our Facebook page and follow all of the great things going on at Community Action. https://www.facebook.com/CommunityAction/

We are looking forward to the days ahead and the good they will bring, and we hope you are too.

Until next time,

Georgann Roth, Volunteer Resources Coordinator/Foster Grandparent Program Administrator

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**BistroTheology**

When: Thursday, May 28 @ 7 pm
Where: via Zoom!

Come join us for great conversations about stuff that matters.
Follow us on Facebook for more info: www.facebook.com/bistrotheology

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**Worship in a Box**

We want to deliver “Worship in a Box” to you! Over the next few weeks, we will be working on a resource box that can be delivered to your front door. It will contain hands-on resources that relate to the weekly worship services. The box will contain activities for all ages and will start with Pentecost Sunday, May 31st. If you would like a box delivered, please contact the office at office@eastridge.org or Kris Adler-Brammer at kadlerbrammer@eastridge.org. We would like your “order” by Wednesday, May 20th and we will be making the deliveries on Sunday, May 24th.

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The Wednesday morning bible study group is studying the book That You May Believe: a study of the Gospel of John. We will continue to meet via Zoom for now.
There are two apps that I find very relaxing while ‘vegging’ during my time of social distancing. They are ‘Happy Color’ and ‘Bible Coloring.’ These are for untrained artist-want-a-be folk like me. In another words, paint/color by number! Ok, I confess! I recall days as a young boy painting/coloring number pictures of rockets and nature. When I grew older, I graduated to oil paint-by-number of such things as DaVinci’s Last Supper. Admittedly, it looked rather good, for an artist-wanna-be.

Anyway, to get back to the apps – Happy Color and Bible Coloring. One can find them in the play store app on their phones or tablets. What I enjoy about coloring is seeing the outline take substance with the colors being filled in the picture. Eventually, when the picture is finished, it has an animation of the colors filling in to show the completed picture. I don’t know what I enjoy more – coloring or the animation.

That gets me to reflecting on walks that I take in the neighborhood or along a path of trees that are just now budding. It causes me to appreciate the unfolding picture of spring emerging in front of my eyes – as trees begin to bud and the buds make way for the gradual leaf to unfold. It all begins when the sap of the tree starts to flow again and life comes to full blossom. It is a picture that is beyond the paint-by-numbers that I have fun with each day. This walk in nature and seeing the true beauty of a tree, a flower, a bush, and even a brown lawn transforming to a luscious green color far surpass the brief moment of a color by number app.

One spiritual practice that I do with my daily walks is listening to Christian gospel music through my ear phones or to an app that shares the daily lectionary such as Pray As You Go (found in the play store). It is a British produced app that is sponsored by the Jesuits. They share a musical reflection of a monastery or choral group followed by the reading of the day and a reflection. It is using a lectio divina style which has the listener reflect on what the passage and musical offering is saying to oneself.

I apply the coloring experiences I have had to this. I share this diversion and relaxation for a reason, especially if the picture ignites a story – an imaginative picture in my mind and heart of how it takes on another dimension – meaning – symbol. The pictures I see unfolding in nature and on my walks are a lectio divino which convey a symbol, a story, a meaning of God’s presence within my view.

When you may take a walk, why not observe the trees, the flowers, the plants, the bush and even the lawn and what God may be conveying to you through an imaginative story, symbol, or thought. God’s creation carries messages to us and we might be inspired by what those messages can be as spring unfolds and the openness of God’s Spirit brings new meaning and life to us all.

One can find additional spiritual support through hymns like: “This is My Father’s World,” or any of the creation psalms that extol the wonders of God’s universe, especially Psalm 8. Let this just begin the seed to germinate in each of you and how God may use that psalm, that hymn, that plant, flower, tree or lawn to bring a new life story to you in your life.

Pastor John J. Duling, Parish Associate
Session Highlights: April

The Session removed Mike Birnstihl from the member rolls, deceased April 4, 2020, and affirmed that the Rev. Thomas Dummmermuth officiated at the graveside service for Mike Birnstihl on April 8, 2020.

The Session removed Mary Jane Huxtable-Koch from the member rolls, deceased April 13, 2020.

The Session acknowledged the e-mail vote to close the building to all outside groups except the day care and the pantry. The motion passed.

The Session acknowledged the e-mail vote to post the youth coffee fundraiser on the website. The motion passed.

The Session approved the motion of the Worship Commission to accept the proposal from Infinite Systems to move the church server. The change will enable staff to work securely from anywhere.

The Session approved a motion to schedule confirmation for August 2, 2020, which is near the proposed date for the Lincoln Public Schools graduation ceremony. The Session will meet with the confirmands prior to that date for the examination.

Rev. Jones Pointon reported that worship services will be livestreamed from staff homes rather than from the sanctuary to provide a greater feeling of community and to allow greater physical distance. This will also allow Vince to run the equipment from home rather than having to transport the equipment to church each week. Rev. Jones Pointon expressed appreciation for the work of the staff during this time of the COVID-19 crisis.

Rev. Dummmermuth presented plans for the Nebraska Corona Bible project. Individuals and groups will be asked to copy the Bible by hand as a spiritual discipline. The project will be open to anyone. The Session fully endorsed the project.

Kris Adler-Brammer reported that she has prepared and distributed activities to preschool and elementary students, including an Easter-in-a-box craft project. She is using an app to keep in touch with the children. Middle school and senior high youth have been meeting by Zoom.

Brian Lew reported that he has served as pianist at a number of worship services and has coordinated all music for worship services, including all Holy Week services. He organized a four-hour recording session to prepare music for future worship services, including choral scholars and other soloists. He has also created a three-times-a-week musical devotion for the webpage and attended youth Zoom meetings.

The finance reports show that donations are less than last year, but expenditures are also lower because cleaning services have been reduced. Eastridge received a loan from the Payroll Protection Program of the federal stimulus package. The loan will not have to be repaid as long as the staffing level remains the same until December. The Session approved a motion to open a separate checking account for the funds as recommended by the church accountant.

Most of our Bible studies and other groups are meeting via Zoom during this time! Check out the church website and/or Facebook page for more info, or email the office.
Thank you to those of you who have either mailed your offering/pledge support to the office, or given electronically during this time of virtual worship! You can give by going to www.eastridge.org and clicking on the SERVE menu, then GIVE TO EASTRIDGE. There is also a Member Weblinks link at the bottom of the page. Or you can mail it to the office!

Rev. Dr. Melodie Jones Pointon................Senior Pastor
Rev. Thomas Dummermuth.....................Associate Pastor
Rev. Dr. John Duling..........................Parish Associate
Kris Adler-Bramer.........................Youth and Children’s Ministries
Donna Gustafson...............................Office Manager
Andy Kalnins............................Night/Weekend Custodian
Dr. Brian Lew.................................Director of Music Ministries
Brent Shaw.................................Organist
Will McGuire...............................Worship Leader
Chase Crispin...............................Children’s Music
Vince Ruhl.................................Audio/Visual Technician
Jennifer Russell.............................Nursery
Office number.............................402-488-7844
Melodie Jones Pointon: mjonespointon@eastridge.org
Thomas Dummermuth: tsummermuth@eastridge.org

UPDATE FROM CALVIN CRESTM: Eastridge Presbyterian Church,

The World has changed. Here’s what’s new with Calvin Crest.

I haven’t sent out a mass email letting you know what was up with Calvin Crest because you’ve probably been inundated with those messages from every business that has your email address. And you were focusing on setting up a home work space for you and your kids. And figuring out how to remain connected to people. And working through worship opportunities. And deciding how best to be socially distant.

You had important things on your mind and those things will continue to weigh on you.

Life has changed for so many of us. Places like Calvin Crest will be even more important when we are on the other side. We will need places to gather. Places to be in joyful fellowship. Places to experience genuine face-to-face community. Places to relax and let the burdens of life slip away.

My last email, shortly before the pan-dem started, listed a bunch of upcoming activities at Calvin Crest. With the directed health measures limiting the number of people that gather, those events through May 6 have been cancelled or postponed.

We are still planning for summer camp. I don’t know what that will look like, but the hope that it brings is essential for our campers that are already registered. Safety and health are high priorities and we are working through ways to maintain the safety and health of our guests of all ages. We are looking forward to a robust Fall season of retreats, conferences and events. And, we are looking forward to a wonderful Family Fun Day on August 22, 2020.

This place will be here to serve you and your family on the other side. Until then, stay safe, wash your hands often and pray.

Craig Huffman, Executive Director