

Dear ones,

Greetings in the name of Jesus, the one who has risen!

There are some things to update all of you about. And I hope that our Prayer Partners will update those folks they are calling (who respond to their calls!) when they speak to them the next time. Thank you for that wonderful ministry.

**1. Bounce Back Plan/Soft Return:** What I know is on many people's hearts and minds is "when can we return to church?!" The short hand answer is, no one knows, but the virus will tell us. But here are some things to remember:

\*Because of the age demographics of Adoration (80% over 50; 60% over 65), the people who probably want to come back the most are the people who should come back the least and last. They are the most vulnerable to contracting the virus and having a tougher time with it.

\*Remember: you can have the virus and not know it. You can transmit the virus to someone else and not know it. You can receive the virus from someone else who does not appear to have the virus. We stay apart right now, so that when we return, we can all return.

\*We need to begin to wrap our heads around a new way of being church until there is a vaccine. And, our return to church, however and whenever it happens, will be slow and have to be flexible. Because if there is a virus surge we need to respond to that in terms of safety.

\*We also need to think about what it is about church that has meaning. Because church, as we have known it, will have to be very different in the return, before there is a vaccine. We will need to do music differently. Think about how or if we do Holy Communion. Think about how do we keep social distance. And, really, really think about what each one of us is willing to do--or not--to keep all of us safe. Right now, the Bishop and his staff are thinking through, with the clergy of the Synod, what kinds of recommendations they will have for us.

Last week, the staff of the Wisconsin Council of Churches, in consultation with health care professionals and other experts, published an extensive set of recommendations regarding how churches could safely go about the task of re-opening in the time ahead of us. That document has been distributed to your Council. (If you would like to see a copy yourself you can find it on the Greater Milwaukee Synod website [[www.milwaukeesynod.org](http://www.milwaukeesynod.org)] under their COVID-19 resources section--or ask me for a copy. It's readily accessible.) Also, some of you have noted that the Roman Catholic Archdiocese has sent out some guidelines. There are some good ideas, I think, in their guidelines--but also lots that does not pertain to us.

What we all now know, even as we dislike the thought, is that the coronavirus is changing the landscape of worship and we will all need to adapt in order to keep one another safe. And the changes will be sweeping. Some of them very hard. But adapting and making those changes is what the love of Jesus looks like in our world right now.

**2. Payroll Protection Plan:** To offset the loss of revenue that has occurred since we are not worshipping together in church, your leadership applied for this assistance from the Federal Government. Today, May 5, the money was deposited in our account. Not every church had the wherewithal to access this money. But we had George Becker and Bob Yersin to champion this process and then Sharon Anderson who did some very heavy lifting during a tight time frame to make this happen for us. We won't be hugging in the near future, but as many virtual hugs as you can manage, send their way! We really needed this money and we are very grateful for the work that was done to make this happen for us.

**3. Jim and Judy Goodwin need for donations:** This is a reminder from last week--Jim and Judy Goodwin's daughter and son-in-law - Sarah and Brad Buck - just found out they will become foster parents this month for a baby boy. They believe they will have him for some years. They are looking to find people

who could donate supplies - such as clothing, furniture, etc. If you are able to help Judy's number is 414 281-9368 - if you need any information directly from her. (Sarah's phone number is 262 442-7755.)

**4. Mt. Meru Coffee:** And another reminder that if you want a "taste of home" that you can purchase the coffee you drink at church through the Mt. Meru Coffee Project. Their website is () Their need is very real for the support and the coffee is great. I believe that they are shipping for free.

**5. Deaths:** There are sad happenings in our church family.

*\*Nonie-Sue Imp: I believe that by now most of you know that Nonie died on April 25th. Her visitation at the funeral home and burial was April 30. Adoration will have a Memorial for her when it is possible to do so. (This is also true for Joe Bettin, and Crystal Wilms' grandfather, Vernon.)*

*\*Helen Nowakowski: Tom Nowakowski's mother, Helen, died on May 1. Her visitation will be on Monday, May 11 from 10-12. Ten people will be allowed in at a time with everyone else waiting in the parking lot. The visitation will be at the Rozga-Walloch Funeral Home, 4309 S. 20 Street. 414-281-7145.*

*\*Wayne Duris: You will have already received the information that Wayne Duris died this afternoon. May he rest in peace and rise in glory. More information to follow as it is available.*

**6. From Katie Schmidt:** We want to thank everyone who came to wish Alexandra a Happy 10th Birthday. She was definitely surprised and smiling ear to ear! Our Adoration family has been such a huge blessing to us and so supportive in the absence of our extended families whom do not live nearby. Your support in celebrating her birthday was very much appreciated and it was so good to see everyone. Also, a huge thanks to everyone who sent cards and facebook messages, her face lit up when reading and watching the birthday messages. We miss you all!!

**7. Gratitude:** I am so grateful to all of you who are continuing to be the church that is Adoration. You are calling one another, making masks, watching and taking care of the church, emptying the mailbox and sorting the mail, paying bills, sending in donations, attending Bible study, listening to sermons together, and, God have mercy, some of you are having endless conversations with your Interim Pastor as we continue to keep Adoration moving forward as a church, and as a blessed church in pastoral transition. Each and every one of you who is doing your part to keep Adoration the vibrant church community that it is, are beloved--of me and of God. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

**8. Pastoral Care:** If you need something PLEASE call me. It absolutely makes me nuts to hear "I didn't want to call her because I know she is busy." I AM busy and you are what I am busy about and for. So, please call if you need something or just want to chat. Please.

**9. Call Process:** A reminder that the Council suspended the Call Process for a month and will review that decision at the upcoming Council meeting on May 12. Please continue to pray for your Call Committee and for the new Pastor who, as I type this, is already on the way to you. They, and you, just don't know it yet.

**10. Attachment:** Attached you will find what would have been called "Words from the Interim Pastor" if we had a newsletter right now. I am attaching it and also embedding it in this email for those of you who hate opening attachments. It will make this a long email, so feel free to ignore it in this email and save it for later.

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### Words from the Interim Pastor

My mother died when I was in seminary. She died the summer between my first and second years when I was in required Clinical Pastoral Education (C.P.E.), which is a time when seminarians are assigned to

hospitals to learn hospital pastoral care skills. I was assigned to the Emergency Room and Oncology (Cancer) unit at Rockford Memorial Hospital. And it was awful.

I was midway through the required summer term experience when my mother died. I had to take ten days off of C.P.E. to be with her as she died, and then manage the funeral and burial. What that meant was that I then had to make up those ten days. I did so in a series of overnight on-calls. And it was awful.

I lived in Madison at the time and drove to Rockford every day. I howled my grief in the car between the two cities. But I had to be ready to do ministry each day when I got to the hospital at 7AM. During the day it was mostly okay. For several weeks I pretty much avoided the floors of the hospital in the depths of my grief. But at night was a different story. I was the on-call chaplain for the hospital which meant that anytime there was a death I was called. I was grieving myself and it was absolutely awful.

One night I was called to four deaths. I was okay for the first three, but by the time I was called to the fourth death at 3AM I was almost incoherent with my own exhaustion and grief. As I said prayers with the family right after their wife/mother/sister had died, tears ran down my own cheeks. I could not stop them. The family was so impressed with my compassion for their family they even wrote a letter to my C.P.E. supervisor expressing their gratitude. But I knew the truth, those tears were for my mother, not their mother. I knew that if I had been called to another death that night I would not have been able to go. I would have had to call in a supervisor. Blessedly, there was mercy and that was the last death of the night.

I returned to seminary that fall. And it was really hard. But I had my classmates, my friends, and a cycle of prayer together that began to sustain me. But it was still really hard.

And then Easter came, and with it, of course, for those of us in the Midwest, came spring. And new life, and flowers, and green things. And finally, slowly, as the days went by I began to heal. I began to notice the good things. I began to appreciate God's grace again. I began to breathe more easily, to smile a bit more, to remember that life goes on—and that my mother's life goes on. And that I would see her again. During that spring, it was no longer awful. It was graced.

We are in that time now. It's a hard time. So much death all around us. People are anxious, and depressed and sad.

But all around us are also the signs of new life; of God's grace—smack dab in the middle of a pandemic are bright yellow daffodils, the beginnings of tulips, grass being cut for the first time (and that wonderful aroma!), baby bunnies hopping around. It's spring—a reminder that there is always more life and that there will always be more life. That's the essential promise of our faith.

I began to heal that spring of 1994. I still miss my mother but I know that I will see her again. And I know that life continues. . . her life, my life, our life. I miss all of you, too. But I know that I will see you again. And that the life of Adoration will continue.

Please notice the new life all around you. Watch for signs of God's grace even in the midst of loss. It will be by noticing and celebrating the ways that God remains with us, that we will be the church of the future. And we will be that church together. Praise God. I love you. ~~Pastor Debra

(The Rev.) Debra Trakel, LCSW, M.Div.

She/her/hers

"People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." (Maya Angelou)