

The Reverend's Ruminations - July 2020

Is it possible that I'm already collecting thoughts for the JULY newsletter? I feel like I'm still trying to make family plans for the summer, and yet it's already well underway! I pray that you have taken advantage of the generally pleasant temperatures to be outside and feeling a little less confined, even if most of your time is still spent at (or near) home.

Unfortunately, weather and the coronavirus are not the only topic of conversation these days. Amid the "altered reality" of our response to a worldwide pandemic, we find ourselves with heavy hearts and souls as what may have seemed dormant racial divisions have once again come to the forefront of our nation in the wake of the horrific death of George Floyd right here in our own state. We have all seen the way emotions boiled over in the immediate aftermath of his death, and while extremes like looting, burning, and other vandalism do not help anyone's cause, widespread peaceful protests have opened up many new conversations that point to substantial changes on the horizon. As Christians, we must remain committed to Jesus' shining example of love and care for all persons—regardless of race, nationality, or social standing.

As you'll read in the Church Council minutes, after much conversation on the topic of what it would look like to resume in-person worship services, we agreed that in the interest of the health and safety of our congregation, we will continue with the current Facebook Live / RightNow Media / cable access channel worship format through July. We are very aware that several of the churches in our community have already resumed various forms of in-person worship with varying levels of public safety precautions. While this sounds to some like a bandwagon that we should already be on, we are not the only congregation in Fairmont exercising caution in the face of this ever-evolving disease. Each congregation has its own circumstances against which to base decisions, and we feel that currently our best option is to remain safely separated. A committee has been formed that will be assembling a plan in the coming weeks to be ready for special events like funerals, and the guidelines developed will be used to plan for our eventual return to worship in the church building.

Be prepared that when we do finally resume in-person worship services, they will look quite different from what you last experienced in mid-March. The important thing to remember is that no matter where or how we "do" worship, it is about just that: WORSHIP. Whether you press your back into a wooden pew, recline in your favorite easy chair, or tune in from the seat of your boat, the posture of your heart should be one of worshipping God. Several have commented to me that it must be hard to preach to an empty sanctuary, but while I'd much rather enjoy the interpersonal reaction of you and your family from the pews, once I begin leading the service I am at worship too: lifting praise, prayer, and song to God Almighty. Sure, some laughter at one of my jokes or a well-placed "Amen" during the sermon might encourage a more animated delivery of my message, but that's where I just have to envision each of you until we can be together again.

To again borrow words from our Conference Minister, Rev. Shari Prestemon:

"This particular season has taught us so much about ourselves, about our church life, and about our interconnectedness as communities, a nation, and a Conference. May we receive these lessons with grace and allow them to continue shaping our life together in this difficult season and in every season to follow. This is but one small season in God's grand story and we shall journey our way through it as God's people always have: faithfully, imperfectly, and with unshakable hope."

You may be getting out in public more than you have in recent weeks, but please continue to keep in touch with one another, as many are rightfully exercising caution about their public exposure for personal or medical reasons. Human interaction, whether face-to-face, through video technologies, or by phone, is important to everyone's mental and spiritual well-being. Be a blessing to one another as you heed the guidance of the Holy Spirit!

Yours in Christ,
Rev. Cory Germain