

Pastor's Corner Summer 2020

Well, it's been a long time. A long time since I wrote one of these articles. A long time since we were able to gather together in church for worship, learning, or fellowship. A long time since much of anything was anything like what we once called normal.

It's been a long time, and during that long time, we've all been challenged to do things in new and different ways. Worship went online, and you watched us on YouTube or Facebook. Meetings happened on Zoom (and how many of us have even heard of Zoom prior to the shutdown). Parents became teachers, and homes became offices. We learned how to shop online, and we had fewer stores to go to in person.

We learned a whole new definition of the term "essential worker", and people we used to take for granted suddenly became people we needed desperately. We had time to clean our homes and clean out our homes. We did home repairs on a massive scale and gardening became wildly popular. We read books and did puzzles and sat together and talked and found all kinds of new ways to entertain ourselves.

We learned about social distancing and the need to stay 6 feet apart. We wore masks. We made masks. We found new ways to get together and still stay apart. We learned about resilience and patience. We had to deal with fear and uncertainty. We argued and we came together. We fought and we prayed.

Yes, it's been a long time. And as the Grateful Dead said, what a long, strange trip it's been. And we're still in this long time, and this long, strange trip is still going on.

We still can't do what we used to do, and we still can't go all the places we once went to. We still have to keep distance

and wear masks. We still need to practice safety measures and maintain new levels of cleanliness. We still have to be watchful, and we still need to do all we can to avoid catching COVID-19, and avoid spreading COVID-19. We still need to do all we can to "flatten the curve".

It's been a long time, and it will still be a long time. But we keep moving forward. Yes, we stopped doing things here at St. Luke's, but now we're starting to figure out how to do some things once again. We do a monthly dinner again, but now it's a drive-through meal. And we have worshipped together outdoors, and we have worshipped together indoors. We are looking at how to continue these worship gatherings, while still being safe. Our joint goals are to find ways to be together while always respecting the need to keep one another safe and well.

I am sure, as the time goes on, that we will find more ways to be together. A Golf Outing is planned for September 11th. The Annual Yard Sale, once called JuneFest, will now be on September 26th (SeptemberFest?). We will find a way to restart our education ministry. Our committees will get back to work. We may have to discover a new normal, but whatever that new normal is, we will get there, and claim it, and celebrate it.

Because throughout all of this, God has been with us. And going forward, God will be with us. The once unchanging constant in all of this, is the abiding, loving presence of God. Whatever else may change, the love of God in Jesus Christ is unchanging. It is the one constant in an ocean of change. It is the one thing we can count on, even when we feel like we can't count on anything else.

God is with us, that is the great, constant, abiding good news for all of us. We have all been through a lot since the middle of March, a whole lot. And I suspect there's a lot more

we'll have to go through in the weeks and months to come. And through it all, God is with us. Leading us, guiding us, comforting us, consoling us, inspiring us, empowering us. God walks beside us, and ahead of us, wherever our journey takes us, whatever awaits us. God is our refuge and strength, God is our hope and our peace, God is our companion and guide, God is our Savior and Redeemer – always.

It's been a long time, in a lot of ways. This has truly been a long, strange trip. And yes, it still goes on. But we go on with God. God is the One who makes all things new, who makes us new every day, who renews our strength and renews our hope. God is the One who fills us with eternal, unconditional love. God is the one who forgives us when we fail, picks us up when we fall, holds us when we stumble. God will never, ever let us go, and God will bring us through this time. We walk together, united in faith, hope, and love, united in Christ, united in the power of God.

Be well, be safe, be strong in the Lord. Pray always, seek the good in all things. Put your trust and hope in God. Do love, give love, receive love, live love. Be a blessing to others, even as you are daily blessed by God.

I look forward to when I will once again, see you in church.

Peace,

Pr. Paul