



April 9, 2020

Beloved Community,

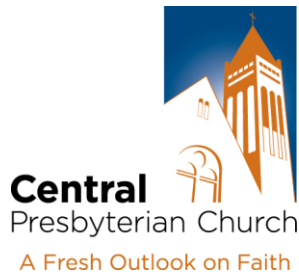
How are you doing? How are you *really* doing?

For my pastoral letter this week, I'd like to focus on how you are faring -- physically, emotionally, and spiritually -- through this crisis. It's impossible to underestimate the toll anxiety and upheaval takes on individuals and families. For people who live with others, the stay-at-home order means developing some new practices around working, schooling, and living in the same space, all day, every day. For people who live singly, feelings of isolation may increase. For all of us, the uncertainty of how -- and how long -- the pandemic will play out imbues each day with some unease and even dread. People I've talked with have mentioned restlessness, distraction, exhaustion...and guilt for having "negative" emotions when they also have much for which to be grateful. Yet I think it's possible to hold both negative and positive feelings together. We're all experiencing loss as a consequence of coronavirus, and coping means recognizing and mourning those losses, as well as expressing gratitude for the good that we experience too.

David Brooks, the NY Times columnist and best-selling author, recently cited research that studied the effects of children in London during World War II who were sent away from their families to shelter with others in rural, safer communities, away from the terror of bombings and air raids. Surprisingly, the children who remained in London suffered less trauma than the ones who were sent away. Relationships (even more than threat of physical injury) are the most important factor in overcoming trauma and developing resilience.

The Church at its core is a community of relationships, with God and with one another. Even when we can't be together in the same space (and boy, do I miss you!), we are connected and united through God's Spirit. Doing one thing each day that reminds you that you are part of the Beloved Community can mitigate feelings of sadness and dis-ease, and strengthen feelings of belonging and purpose.

- Phone a friend. (My cell is 216.403.3781 and I would love to hear from you!)
- Send an email or write a note and mail it.
- Breathe. Stretch. Walk. Breathe some more.
- Listen to music, and if it's vocal music, sing along. Bravely. With gusto.
- Go outside each evening at 8pm and howl. You won't be the only one and it provides a great sense of solidarity and release!
- Tell jokes. One person sent me a bunch of "bulletin bloopers" that made me laugh out loud. Like this one: *Sunday's sermon topic: What Is Hell? Come early and listen to our choir practice.*
- Pray. Anne Lamott offers this three word prayer: *Help! Thanks! Wow!* Really. It can be as simple as that.



- Tune in to live-streamed worship via [Facebook](#) or Central's [website](#). Good Friday 7pm, and Easter Sunday, 10:30am
- Give. All our mission partners are serving in extraordinary ways. You can donate needed items, money, volunteer time.
- Read. Novels, short stories, the Bible, those books piled up on your bedside table. How about poetry? -- Here's a poem one of you shared recently that inspired me.

*And people stayed home  
And read books and listened and rested and exercised  
And made art and played and learned new ways of being  
And stopped  
And listened deeper  
Someone meditated, someone prayed, someone danced, someone met their shadow  
And people began to think differently and people healed  
And in the absence of people who lived in ignorant ways, dangerous, meaningless and  
heartless,  
And when the danger ended and people found each other  
Grieved for the dead people  
And they made new choices and dreamed of new visions  
And created new ways of life and healed the earth completely  
Just as they were healed themselves.  
--Kitty O'Meara (2020)*

Sometimes we need professionals to help us with mental health. Please don't hesitate to call these helplines to get connected with trained people. 1.844.493.8255 for Colorado Crisis Services 1.800.799.7233 National Domestic Violence Hotline

So how are you? How are you *really*? My prayer for us all is health -- physical, emotional/mental, and spiritual, and for resilience to cope with the daily strain of these difficult times.

And a joyous Easter -- not the one we had planned, but the one we have: in which the good news is *still* good news. Life, not death, has the last word. It is not just Christ's resurrection we will celebrate; it is our own.

With love,

Pastor Louise Westfall