

March 2021

Beloved,

We have reached a milestone this week—it has been a full year since we were able to worship in the sanctuary together. (For those keeping score at home, this means that we have published 54 worship videos on YouTube.) Who knew? In the weeks prior to closing down in-person gatherings, we did the best we could to prepare for the unknown impact a global pandemic: we stopped passing the peace during the service, we gave up hugging, we received instructions during the service about the proper way to wash our hands properly, and we asked our medical folks to keep us from falling down the rabbit hole of misinformation. And of course, we cleaned everything we could think of to clean, and then some.



I'm not going to re-visit every detail of those early days—you were all there, after all. But I think there is something of value to taking a moment or two to celebrate how far we have come in the past 12 months.

We were afraid the church could not survive if we couldn't worship as we always had. We are still here.

We were afraid that people would stop giving if they couldn't attend in person.

We have experienced faithfulness and generosity—even from people who are not a regular part of our pre-Covid congregation.

We were afraid that no one would want to watch church online.

That was true for some. But, we discovered that more people are participating online than we would have had in the building—at all times of the day and night, and from all across the country. We have reached people we will never meet or know.

We were afraid that if the Food Pantry could not serve people in our building, that we would lose all our volunteers and people would not have access to food.

That one has been a challenge. Not everyone could continue to volunteer when we had to change over to a “drive-through” operation. But others stepped up. And we are serving many more families than we were serving a year ago. And our volunteer base, and financial base has expanded, as our community embraced the work of feeding our neighbors.

We were afraid that our children would not thrive, if they couldn't be in the school building.

For many of our children this is, unfortunately, true. However, the teachers, parents, community members and our children have done amazing work. They have creatively built new systems of learning. This season has also drawn necessary attention to the inequities of our institutions of learning. Not all of our children have the same resources from which to draw. This has always been true, true, but Covid has made it even more evident that we have much work to do. AND, I can't think of one parent of school age children who have not given thanks for the work our teachers do for us each day—maybe that will encourage cultural change as well.

We were afraid our medical facilities would be inundated with the critically ill.

Our medical community has worked very hard to help us prevent that happening. Much of what our public health, local physicians, pharmacists and other health professionals have done this year is visible by what we can see, but what we are not seeing. They have worked tirelessly behind the scenes to keep us safe, to keep us healthy, and to prevent the kind of catastrophes that could well have overtaken us.

It has been a most difficult year. But, as I look back, I can see the many blessings of this season as well. Fear does not always speak the truth (unless there is a bear in your path). Fear makes strangers of neighbors. Fear creates scarcity and selfishness.

Fear keeps us isolated. Fear makes us forget who and whose we are. As 1 John 18 reminds us:

There is no fear in love,

but perfect love casts out fear;
for fear has to do with punishment,
and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love.

We have come a long way, Beloved. And there is light, just ahead. God is good, all the time. All the time, God is good. Easter is coming. May our hearts be ready for resurrection.

Blessings and gratitude, Pastor Nancy