

Pandemic

Rev. Lynn Ungar

What if you thought of it as the Jews consider the Sabbath—the most sacred of times?

Cease from travel. Cease from buying and selling. Give up, just for now, on trying to make the world different than it is.

Sing. Pray. Touch only those to whom you commit your life. Center down.

And when your body has become still, reach out with your heart.

Know that we are connected in ways that are terrifying and beautiful. (You could hardly deny it now.)

Know that our lives are in one another's hands. (Surely, that has come clear.)

Do not reach out your hands. Reach out your heart. Reach out your words. Reach out all the tendrils of compassion that move, invisibly, where we cannot touch.

Promise this world your love—for better or for worse, in sickness and in health, so long as we all shall live.

Music Thoughts

We hope you are "tuning in" to our Sunday sermon and music offerings each week. It is a wonderful way to stay connected! I have enjoyed looking for appropriate music to accompany Vicki's message and scriptures. In fact, I get quite sidlined by all the tabs alongside of the hymn choices sometimes, and I hope you do too. It is wonderful to see the many interpretations of the hymns we sing, and I've tried to share some from many different genres. Children revive hope in me, and so we have some interpretations by children. Then there are the magnificent and regal services played by beautiful instruments and full choirs. (Not that ours isn't regal and magnificent in it's own way!) I love to include the use of instruments which reminds me of the talents of those who have accompanied us in the past. In our future offerings, we will see the realm of emotion pass from celebration to sadness as we enter Holy week. And then, at Easter, we'll look forward to trumpets and choruses that recognize the amazing gift of our savior!

Walking and praying with you- Kathy :-)



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The Most Welcoming Presbyterian Church in Essex County

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Greetings in this Easter Season.....

The Gift of Love – 1 Corinthians 13

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; 10 but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.



Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, "Faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love." This Easter season will be a time remembered by us all in a new way. We are living in times of such uncertainty, such fear, and such isolation that it can easily overwhelm us. I welcome you to spend a few moments with Paul's beloved words of 1 Corinthians 13. The words below come from another PCUSA minister, the Rev. Lynn Rubier-Capron, and provided a jumping off point for some thoughts and questions of my own. I pray you might be uplifted by the larger perspective we share as Christians just now.

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Had you thought of social distancing as an act of love? How have you been able to share your love for others in these days? I have seen it in kind emails, phone calls to others who need to hear our voices, the waves and smiles and laughter we can still share, even from a distance, or over the computer. We see faith, hope and love in the work of all the public servants who risk so much to care for others physically, emotionally, spiritually. God is with us, and God is love.



April Birthdays

Bekah Hughes Davis 19
Sherry Jones 20
Mary Wigmore 25

May Birthdays

Charity Chishimba 1
Stacey Orcutt 10
Robbie Tavenner 16
Walter Carr 17
Ron Glass 22
John Colby 27
Vicki Murdock 29

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On faith: "When we name our fear, we discover that is not the whole of who we are. The challenge we face is real. But suddenly we have access again to a larger perspective, faith in the God who created us, God who redeems us and God who sustains us. Faith puts our fears where they belong, in the larger, more capable hands of God and puts us, also, back into God's hands."

How do you think of your faith? Does your faith lift you out of your fear, even if you must return to God over and over again? Have you experienced things in your life that were similar in any way to what we are experiencing now with this pandemic? Do you remember what helped you to go on during that time? Do you feel God's presence with you, perhaps in certain times and places, or perhaps all the time?

On hope: "Hope lightens us so that we can start to see things that were formerly not visible. For the first time, I saw entire families out walking with their children and their pets together. This enlivened my hope — God is redeeming all things and God will redeem this situation as well. I have already seen signs of it, like Saturday in the park."

What have you noticed in this time of "slowing down?" I have spent time with our budding trees and bushes, checking on them each day. A friend gave us some iris bulbs 2 years ago, and now they are shooting up many more leaves than in years past—new growth, new life. I have read about and seen on TV the outpouring of love and service to others that has grown alongside the suffering and sorrow of this time. How has this time of isolation been a blessing to you, even with all the heartache?

Then there's love: "We are social distancing as an act of love, love for our neighbor, whom we don't want to become ill; love of ourselves; and love of our society, which needs time to shore up our medical responses to the unique coronavirus. And love is God's power to let that faith and hope shape us and our world in concrete ways."

