

Life and Love in the Time of COVID-19
Old Dutch Church
May, 2020



“Thursday Night Discussion Group Meeting Via ‘ZOOM’”

“I don’t know....” Since we have had to stop worshipping, eating, and meeting together I find myself saying this a lot: “I don’t know.” I don’t know when we will be together again in the Sanctuary and Bethany Hall on Sunday mornings. I don’t know when all the support groups that meet at Old Dutch will be able to be face to face again. I don’t know when we’ll be able to move about freely without wearing face masks. I don’t know when the hospitalizations and deaths will end. I don’t know when the economy will recover. I don’t know when schools will open again. I don’t know when there will be a vaccine that could prevent the further spread of COVID-19. I don’t know if all the people who have lost their jobs will find work again. I don’t know.



Tyler and Emmett Gillis In School at Home

What I do know is that our lives have been permanently changed by this pandemic. We, with people across the globe, have suffered much and we have learned much. I know that “the earth is God’s and the fullness thereof, the world and all who dwell in it.” God has not left us alone. God brings life out of death and hope from despair.

This disruptive “pause” in our lives has given us many gifts—here are a few:

- It has slowed us down. Prevented many of us from running around and being too busy. Given us time to reflect on our lives. To think about what really matters and how we want to spend our time and energy.
- It has reminded us that we don’t control the universe. We don’t know what the future holds. We have the gift of today, of this moment, and the possibility of being fully present to “now.”
- It has given families who live in the same household more time together (a somewhat mixed blessing!).

This disruptive “pause”... *continued*

- It has invited us into a practice of being thankful for the gifts that surround us right here, right now. On Friday evenings our Church bells ring, and some of us ring the children’s handbells outside, with thanks for all who are serving, caring, risking themselves to provide for us.
- We have learned how to meet and worship using the Web which has made it possible for our own community and folks at a distance (e.g. Indonesia and the Netherlands) to worship together. We will continue to live-stream even when we are able to physically meet again.
- It has brought us into deeper awareness of the socio-economic inequities that exist in our communities and around the world. African Americans are suffering disproportionately from the effects of COVID-19 in our nation. People who live in poverty without adequate healthcare are the most vulnerable to disease and unemployment. We are committed to figure out how we can address these injustices as we move forward.



During this “pause” life has gone on robustly:

- We have celebrated Jesus’s resurrection and the coming alive of creation—flowers bloom, trees leaf out, lambs, chicks, frogs, creatures of every kind have been born. Fields are being plowed and planted. Life is irrepressible and beautiful.
- The roof project is almost finished. Hallelujah! Inside the Church special projects are taking place, including long overdue repairs to the organ and the renovation some of our inside spaces.
- Your tithes and offerings of money and yourselves have made it possible to care for the physical needs of our neighbors. Through the Rev. Joshua Bode and the Protestant Church of Oman we are providing meals for temporary immigrant workers in Oman. Through the Ulster Immigrant Defense Network, several of us are buying and delivering groceries for undocumented immigrants who are seeking a more permanent status in the U.S. Your gifts have also provided meals for local healthcare workers. Others in our community have donated clothes and shoes for children. Some are sewing masks. Thank you for all of your giving! Continue to give!
- There are lots of cards being sent, great conversations are taking place between members of our Church and our larger community, usually at a distance, but also one-on-one, with masks in place! The entire Church staff and the Consistory carry on. We have received a Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan/grant from the government which helps cover some of our payroll expenses. God blesses us. We bless others. If you need anything, please call the Church: 845-338-6759.

I don’t know when we will be face-to-face again, with or without our protective masks. We are following the guidelines of our State and local governments. But I do know that I miss our being physically together, and that you miss it too. I do know that God is moving in the midst of this crisis. Weeping, blessing, holding, healing, and bringing us into greater wisdom and wholeness so that all people and God’s good creation might flourish. Thanks be to God!

Grace and Peace in Abundance,
Pastor Renée