



July-August 2020 Message for Congregations and Lay and Rostered Leaders

Dear Beloved of God –

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

I am writing to a future that is uncertain and unknown, to a situation that is changing not by the month, week, day, or even by the hour, but literally minute by minute, with the certainty that nothing will be the same again. Our church and our world will be very different for all of us on the other side of this coronavirus wilderness.

In many ways, this tragic time has accelerated the movement of the church into profoundly adaptive changes and challenges. And we need to address these challenges in order to be vital communities of witness to Jesus in the 21st century.

There are new opportunities and possibilities before us, including recommitting to a missional model of listening, discerning, experimenting, reflecting, and learning. And, all the while, to keep asking the questions: where is God in our neighborhood? Our community? Our world? And equally importantly: how might we join God in God's mission?

Dear Church, I continue to wonder, to reflect, to pray:

- What is God calling us to be and do in the time ahead? What is God's purpose for us – what is God's mission through us – moving forward?
- What have we learned during the last few months about what is most important in our life together as the body of Christ? And how can we use that knowledge to shape how we will live, work, and serve together? What might we bring into the future from this experience?
- What new skills have we picked up? What other skills and gifts will we need to embrace a new future?
- How might our theological, denominational, and biblical perspectives and traditions inform how we move forward?
- What were the things that seemed so important before the coronavirus crisis that we might give less attention to, or let go of altogether?

Dear Church, I wonder, reflect, pray:

Our life together as the body of Christ, in service to our neighbours and all of creation, is going to be very different moving forward. Be humble and gentle with one another. Honor each other. Make space for lament. Welcome moments of joy. Help each other live into hope. Learn

from this journey through the coronavirus wilderness and let the learning lead you forward. Trust that God is at work in this time and look for the new things God is doing even now.

Thank you for your witness to patient trust in God and to sacrificial, cruciform love for your neighbours. And know that God is with you and even now is planning and nourishing seeds of resurrection life.

The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13

In Christ Jesus – Shalom,
+Larry