



Dear friends,

March 21, 2020

One of the greatest challenges in these coming weeks and possibly months is going to be finding ways to create meaning in our lives. Of course our family is the foundational structure in this way and will remain ever more so. But many of us think of ourselves mainly in terms of what we do--what our job is. When people are introduced to one another typically the first question asked is: "So, where do you work?" No hiatus from work can change our vocation. But without the workplace to give our daily lives meaning, what are we to do?

I invite you to use this time as an extended Lent—a lengthened period of renewal in which you can devote yourself to spiritual disciplines that just weren't possible when you were working full time and always running from here to there. God *never* wants us to suffer but *always* works through our suffering. In this time of social isolation, hear God calling to you: "Now is the time! Return to me! Remember me!" After all, isn't that the call of Lent? "Return to the Lord your God, who is gracious and merciful...." Now we have time to do just that.

As your pastor I am also your spiritual leader. So I beg you, if you love God and love the church, make use of all the avenues for worship and connection Holy Trinity is providing:

- Children's sermons and abridged Sunday worship services (March 22 is up) are posted on our YouTube channel, "Holy Trinity Lutheran Church Marshall WI." You can follow along with worship by downloading the bulletin our web site under "Virtual Worship." In the spirit of the "house church" in which the earliest Christians gathered, I am recording all services from home.
- Join me in the series of daily reflections based our favorite hymns on our web site under "In the Wilderness." Most include a link to that hymn being sung in worship.
- Create a corner in your house for devotion and prayer. Light a candle, put your feet up, and breathe deeply. On the Prayer Resources page of our web site, you may use the Brief Order for Morning Prayer and also the set of assigned readings for daily meditation and Sunday worship. There are links on those pages to all the readings mentioned.
- Join me by Zoom for the Pastor's Coffee Hour every Monday and Thursday at noon, beginning this Monday. Zoom is free and easy to use; download it at zoom.us. And don't forget your cup of coffee!
- Check Facebook and the News page of our web site for all the latest. '

I am no further away than a phone call, email, or text. Please reach out for any reason. With me, I hope you will be convinced that, after we've come through this together, we will be much the stronger for it.

Grace and peace, Pastor Raabe

Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength. (Nehemiah 8:10)