

Aldersgate UMC News  
Letter #5, Sunday, March 22, 2020

### Personal Reflections

First of all, I wish to lift up our prayers for all who are directly dealing with Covid 19, exposure to the virus or just generally concerned. These are frightening times for many.

Our prayers and thanks to our medical professionals who lead stressful days through this pandemic either on the front lines or even in giving advice and support. Our prayers and thanks to those workers in essential services. Without them, the situation could be much worse.

Our prayers for all of us as we work together to combat this pandemic. Patsy Obayashi sent me a nice reflection (she had received from a friend), from F. Scott Fitzgerald when he was self-isolating during the 1920 flu epidemic in Spain. It is a reminder “we” have been through this before and we will come through it again.

Also, please see our weekly prayer list (below). Unfortunately, some of our members have lost loved ones in this time (unrelated to Covid 19). They are unable to even plan services at this time.

Our Weekly Prayers List:

Haruye Ng, Paul Osaki, Sue Nakamura, Tak Nishiura, Sam Nieda, Kiyo Shizuru, Lea Haratani, Hitoshi Tachibana, Chloe Gong, Ginger Powell, Kamila Young, Jieun Lee, David Nelson, Jamie Campbell, Day Kusakai, Mel Imai, Harry Hatasaka, Amy Shao, Hiroko Yoshida, Patrick Chow, Jim Shizuru, Dee Imazeki and Rev. Mariellen Sawada Yoshino.

For Those who have recently lost loved ones:

Mary Tsukushi in the passing of her sister, Kimi Tsukushi.  
Andrea Imazeki Miyahara and family in the passing of her mother, Dee Imazeki  
Ted Noguchi and family in the passing of his brother, Hiro Noguchi  
Leslie Katsura and family in the passing of her uncle, Terry Maoki

Our prayers for our young people away in college and for Peter, Kenneth, and Grant who are in Japan.

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Personal Reflections from Rev. Jon Visitacion:

I began writing this reflection from my car as I waited for the dryer to finish at a coin laundromat. As a chaplain, I'm considered essential staff, so I'm washing my white coat and get ready to stay overnight at the hospital. And one thing I immediately notice is how abandoned this parking lot was, as it is usually filled with cars coming in and out, and struggling to get my dirty laundry out of my car with other cars parked so close by.

I am reminded that we live in this new world of social distancing and sheltering-in-place. And as I read this reflection about what it means to be in this world, and not of this world from the Henri Nouwen Society webpage, I find that we have always lived in a world that produces and promotes anxiety. But the world, as it was, is, and will be, will never define our faith in God, or take away God's presence from us.

We may be confined to our homes, not able to work or go to school, not able to eat our favorite meal at our favorite diner or go watch a movie. We may not be able to shake hands or give hugs and have a worship service, but we can still greet one another with the peace of Christ in more creative ways, and still be able to worship God in our own praise and thanks.

In my praise and thanks, I was blessed to go out on a walk with my son Koki. He was so proud to take his bike out that Santa bought him. He was so happy to ride it and point out that he was like the other bike riders who passed by. He was able to ride his bike in a completely empty parking lot, taking his time as he guided me to see a fence he noticed from afar. For me, I was happy to have this moment of joy, peacefulness, and connectedness amidst a world of fear, stress, and separation.

As you stay present and cautious, may you also see the many blessings in this world that remind us that God's grace is still with us. Amen. --- Rev. Jon

**Personal Note from Rev. Jon Visitacion**

I'm watching The Two Popes on Netflix which has been a fun watch (you can rent/buy on DVD or read a review here). As the movie centers on conversations between Pope Benedict and Pope Francis, the movie speaks to Pope Francis' call to ministry, and his call to serve the poor. It reminds me of my own call to ministry and the idea of discernment. As I have shared with you before, my call to ministry came at a time when I was not sure about my call to computer engineering. Over time my journey has become clearer and clearer where God is calling me towards, and now I find myself here with you all, along with folks at Sequoia Hospital and at Sunnyview. I was in shock and joy when the congregation surprised me for being recommended unanimously to be ordained as a deacon. Even to be working in a hospital right now in the outbreak of covid-19, I hear my call in caring for the sick, the elderly, or isolated in a way that builds bridges and points of spiritual connection amidst physical separation. I've been making phone calls to patients and family members, sending letters, and trying to acknowledge frustration while supporting hope. I'm happy, grateful, and honored to be doing this.

I hope that in your call that you feel the joy, the gratitude, and honor in your calling, and hope that you too find ways to build bridges and points of spiritual connection in this time. Amen.

--- Rev. Jon

**Other Notes:**

1. Aldersgate UMC will suspend all activities including worship through the month of April.
2. Aldersgate UMC Spring Bazaar for 2020 has been canceled.
3. Harmony 84 Spring Concert (May) has been canceled.
4. General Conference of the United Methodist Church has been indefinitely postponed
5. The Tsuru for Solidarity Pilgrimage to Washington D.C. has been indefinitely postponed.

Remember: If anyone needs help with grocery errands, please let me know. We have several people who have volunteered to help.

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**The following was submitted by a church member reminding us that "we" have been through times like this and will re-emerge.**

**LETTER FROM F. SCOTT FITZGERALD, QUARANTINED IN 1920 IN THE SOUTH OF FRANCE DURING THE SPANISH INFLUENZA OUTBREAK.**

Dearest Rosemary,

It was a limpid dreary day, hung as in a basket from a single dull star. I thank you for your letter. Outside, I perceive what may be a collection of fallen leaves tussling against a trash can. It rings like jazz to my ears. The streets are that empty. It seems as though the bulk of the city has retreated to their quarters, rightfully so. At this time, it seems very poignant to avoid all public spaces. Even the bars, as I told Hemingway, but to that he punched me in the stomach, to which I asked if he had washed his hands. He hadn't. He is much the denier, that one. Why, he considers the virus to be just influenza. I'm curious of his sources.

The officials have alerted us to ensure we have a month's worth of necessities. Zelda and I have stocked up on red wine, whiskey, rum, vermouth, absinthe, white wine, sherry, gin, and lord, if we need it, brandy. Please pray for us.

You should see the square, oh, it is terrible. I weep for the damned eventualities this future brings. The long afternoons rolling forward slowly on the ever-slick bottomless highball. Z. says it's no excuse to drink, but I just can't seem to steady my hand. In the distance, from my brooding perch, the shoreline is cloaked in a dull haze where I can discern an unremitting penance that has been heading this way for a long, long while. And yet, amongst the cracked cloudline of an evening's cast, I focus on a single strain of light, calling me forth to believe in a better morrow.

Faithfully yours,

F. Scott Fitzgerald

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