

Aldersgate UMC News
Letter #6 - Aldersgate UMC March 25, 2020

Dear friends,

Let's all take a few deep breaths. Remember, in the midst of so many unknowns, basic deep breathing helps put a pause on increasing anxiety and it grounds us to a place where we can access courage and hope.

We always begin with our prayers for those who have seriously contracted the covid 19 virus. I've heard of a colleague whose son is in serious condition. Our prayers for him, and for all who are struggling with the virus. Our prayers to their family and friends who find it difficult to even support in these times. And our prayers to those who have lost loved one both to covid 19 and through other circumstances.

Our gratitude and prayers to our medical professionals who are feeling stressed, vulnerable and exhausted as they report to work on the front lines in combating the virus.

Our gratitude and prayers to those in essential services that are keeping our basic needs in our society so we can continue to shelter in place.

People continue to reach out to one another which is a wonderful news. Continue to do so – our contact is essential in enduring this shelter in place.

In the last letter, someone let me know the F. Scott Fitzgerald letter may not be historical accurate as it may be out of context – or, not even real. This may be true (and it may not be), but the construction of the letter/story still has a poignant message that we will and can make it through this sheltering in place for it has been done in history before. Thus, let's take the meaning of the post rather than the historical accuracy or inaccuracy.

In this email, I share a reflection and a reflection from Janis Yamaguma who shares a facebook reflection on a post by Satsuki Ina (Leader of Tsuru for Solidarity).

AND – Morgan Ome shares a poem that reminds us of the loss for so many students graduating this year. Our prayers for them. – Morgan's poem focuses on those graduating from college, but it is a reminder of the grief felt by all students (and parents) graduating this year.

Lastly, breathe deeply. (repeat as needed).

Stay safe, be healthy and be hopeful!

Roger

Personal Reflections by Rev. Roger Morimoto

“Change is Coming”

For a large majority of us, this “shelter in place” leaves us with a lot of time to think; and as we watch the news, it is easy for our anxiety and fear begin to get the best of us. As we hear of hoarding and panic buying, we begin to succumb and wonder, “should I be doing the same?” Or we hear of and realize the severity and the continuing spread of the virus; we begin to feel a sense of fear and panic taking over.

Then, we watch a video posted by friends, or on facebook, of some random acts of kindness in the face of this fear. Or someone sends us a humorous video that lightens ups our circumstances and we begin to feel better about the moment.

Then, there has been for some, the sense they have had time to reconnect (via text, email and even phone calls) with old friends and family members – the proverbial “silver lining”).

In the span of a day, we go through a range of feelings and emotions. Like a jeep on rough terrain, our emotions feel every bump and dip along the way. At times, it feels as if it is constantly changing.

And perhaps, this is the one constant, change!

We are living through a sea of change; but more significantly, it is not just about daily change. Over this whole experience of the pandemic, we – each of us - will have been changed.

We will think and feel about things differently than we did before the pandemic. Our sense of self and our purpose will have shifted. Our plans and our dreams are yet to be determined. It will be a new world.

How we change though, we do not know. In many ways, it will not just depend upon what happens “out there”, but what happens within us. Will we succumb to our base instincts of fear and paranoia? Will we look out for only ourselves?

Or will we listen to our higher self and find a deeper courage, a broader hope. Will we recognize that God’s Spirit is truly within us and this Spirit has helped us to move through these challenges that we face – thus, inspiring us not only in our personal lives but to also build a better world.

At this point, we do not know what we will do; but as we go through the daily grind, the daily challenges and rollercoaster of emotions – stop, and each day, take stock of what parts of you are listening to. It is your fear or is it your higher self. Are driven only by anxiety or are you hearing the still small voice of God within?

When this is all said and done, let us find ourselves, together, changed in ways that are more courageous and inspirational.

Roger

Facebook post by a person unnamed (Shared by Janis Yamaguma)

I wanted to share this message I received over the weekend from Satsuki Ina of Tsuru for Solidarity. She talks about “Issei tenacity” during tough times. I remember my Issei grandmother Kashiwagi, who had a tent built away from the house so my grandfather, who had contracted tuberculosis, would be isolated from the rest of the family. She was so determined to protect her kids that she sent my father away to live in Los Angeles for a year so he wouldn’t come down with the highly contagious TB. I’m grateful that her tenacity saved my father, and in turn, saved me.

Message from Tsuru for Solidarity by Satsuki Ina

Dear Grateful Crane,

With all that is going on in the world and the necessary postponement of our Tsuru for Solidarity Caravan and Pilgrimage to Close the Camps, I thought it would be important to reach out to you personally to let you know that all of us working on behalf of Tsuru for Solidarity are thinking about you. It has been disappointing for all of us to pivot and redirect our efforts to deal with so much sudden and dramatic change, but as in any crisis, this corona virus pandemic is calling on us to be our best.

There is so much news about the impact socially, economically, and personally for each and every one of us. It is easy to get wrapped up in the daily news report and climbing numbers of people falling victim to the disease. It’s

easy to fall into a state of constant anxiety, stress and fear. So please take a deep breath, look around you and find something or someone you are grateful for as you face these difficult times.

Right now, I'm remembering my grandfather Mitsui, an Issei who came to America, escaping poverty in Nagano-ken with hopes of fulfilling the familiar immigrant dream. He worked hard as a section laborer for the Great Northern Railroad. He told me stories about how the Japanese laborers were sent out under the worst of conditions and the most dangerous of circumstances to save the trains that were snowbound in the Northwest mountain tops. I would later learn of the cruel physical and emotional abuse that racism played in spite of his desire to be a good citizen. I'm grateful that he never gave up. That his determination and will made it possible for him to not only survive, but to raise a family of contributing members of society.

Somewhere deep inside of me lays that same determination and will. And I believe none of us Japanese American descendants would be here today if we didn't each carry that Issei tenacity. So it's time to call on that part of us to be the very best we can today to be kind, patient, loving and strong leaders for our families and our community. Let's each take the lead to be helpful to others even during this time of social isolation, to reach out to those by phone or internet who may be isolated, to offer comfort to those who are struggling to overcome their fear. It may be a family member or a total stranger. Such actions are contagious and more powerful than any disease virus that comes our way.

We are in a state of rare awareness of the interdependence of all things. Dear Friends, stay safe by practicing social distancing, stay healthy, and stay in community. We at Tsuru for Solidarity are sending you loving thoughts and deep appreciation for your support.

We are committed to use this time to continue with our mission to Close the Camps. We will not be deterred. We are already planning new solidarity actions for this moment and we will be in touch soon to invite you to join this effort.

Gambarimashō!

Satsuki Ina and the Tsuru for Solidarity Team

Tsuru for Solidarity is a volunteer-run non-violent direct action group of Japanese Americans dedicated to closing the camps.

"Senior Toast" by Morgan Ome

Senior Toast

by Morgan Ome

You didn't have time to pack up your room the way you wanted to: no lingering over the creased acceptance letter you kept in your desk, no carefully removing the tape from the backs of Polaroids.

You didn't have a chance to walk across the empty quad alone
or make a midnight run for mozzarella sticks, gather your freshman-year friends for one last night.

In a haste, you threw all your memories into a box for later excavation, hoping you didn't forget any of the important ones.

Back in your hometown, you sleep in your childhood bed. The wallpaper is unfamiliar and you feel like a guest. Sometimes, you try on the too-small shell you left behind but your body doesn't know how to adapt its old home. "Growing pains," your mother tells you, when you wake up each morning with aches.

After all of this:

the all-nighters you pulled, cramped in a cubicle;

the impromptu parties with cheap beer and bad music; the constant flush of new friendship (or more);

the jokes exchanged with a stranger in your twin bed; the rushed papers and the scrawled problem sets; didn't you deserve more?

You've been waiting for the moment to arrive,
and now it's here, with little fanfare.
You won't get the fancy paper, or the Pomp and Circumstance playing on loop, or the photograph with the president.
But in my mind—for the last four years—
you've always been crossing the stage.
You've always been wearing the cap and gown.
And I am always singing as you enter the auditorium, and cheering as you wave to the bleachers,
and waiting to shower you with a dozen gardenia leis. These moments are ceaselessly occurring.
So raise your glass. Let's toast to you.
In this moment,
we celebrate that your life is commencing today and every day.

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, Patricia Orr, Jamie Campbell, Day Kusakai, Mel Imai, Harry Hatasaka, Amy Shao, Hiroko Yoshida, Patrick Chow, Jim Shizuru, Dee Imazeki and Rev. Mariellen Sawada Yoshino.

New Prayers:

Wendy Ng's cousin, Patricia Orr, who had a brain hematoma/surgery and is recovering at her daughter's home.

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