

Aldersgate UMC News

Letter # 7 - Sunday, March 29, 2020

"I wish it need not have happened in my time," said Frodo. "So do I, said Gandalf "and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us." - From Lord of the Rings... (submitted by a church friend)

Dear friends,

My thoughts and prayers are with all of us as we continue to maneuver our way through these unprecedented times. Thank you all who have been reaching out to one another. Thank you for each of you in your own self-reflection and deepening of your inner life.

In these past few days, the stress, strain, and danger in which our medical professionals are facing are truly coming to light as they firsthand confront the Covid 19 pandemic. Please say a prayer for them.

We continue to be grateful and prayerful for those providing essential services.

Our continued prayers for those on our prayer list and those who have directly contracted Covid 19 or been knowingly exposed.

This week, I have seen something I haven't seen in a few years. Squirrels and the neighbor's cat running through the patio area. In recent years, they have not been around. My theory (just a theory), is that it might have something to the presence and now, the non-presence of the CLF children on site... just a theory.

Also, on the topic of nature, Chris and I have been dealing with one or two finches banging into our window, over and over again. It is so disheartening to see. No matter how much we try to scare them away, they come back daily.



I shared this with Elaine Morizono, and she sent me a beautiful pic of a house finch that was perched outside her window. Elaine mentioned she felt the finches know something is not quite right – for they are behaving differently. She says, "When I heard and then saw the one in the photo, it was all alone, which is unusual. Often after they sing, they are joined by others, but no others showed up. How sad."

There have been many stories about nature making a comeback against the pollution created by human activity and disregard for our planet. Maybe we are to listen to a deeper message in the midst of this crisis.

Mary (Ishizaki) Schallock sends her greeting and love from Wisconsin. Her brother, Fred, shared with me a funny and heartwarming story.

Fred was going through his parents' old boxes and found a large unmarked box from his dad, Hisashi. Hisashi passed away in 2012. Inside of the box was ... toilet paper! I think I can hear Hisashi right now saying, "See!" As Fred said, "My dad is still making me laugh."

Wishing everyone well. Jon and I share the following reflections. Please see the prayer list below and other notes.

Roger

Roger's Reflection - What does hope look like when we "Shelter in Place"?

In the first week, I was pretty motivated to get things done. I still had a sense of urgency to my tasks around the church. With the help of a few others, we patched and painted the wall, created a bypass for condensation on the AC (no more grinding sound when in use), cleaned utility closet, weed control, trimming branches, cleared old files, etc...

As we enter the end of the second week, there are still things to do but my motivation is waning. The sense of "why bother" has crept in, and taking care of things feels a bit useless as this shelter-in-place is extended.

Then, I read a FB post from one of the church members regarding depression. I began to realize, perhaps, I was starting to feel a little depressed. Obviously, I was not dealing with depression or sadness like those that are truly being challenged in these times; but nonetheless, on a lesser scale, the sense of loss was beginning to creep into my being.

What to do?

Then, I was reminded of the words of the apostle Paul from his letter to the Romans, chapter 5:

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. – Romans 5:1-5

Paul reminds us that we need to build hope within ourselves, and this hope is built from recognizing a few things about our situation and about ourselves.

1. We need to recognize, we are suffering or struggling. This is hard. This is difficult. There are loss and sadness. There is grief. (boast of our sufferings)

2. We need to keep "doing". We need to keep doing the things that we are doing as if it will make a difference in either our lives, or the world, or both. Even if the "doing" is meditating, reading, resting, taking care of ourselves, building ourselves up or if it's building up others by connecting and encouraging, or helping in some small way. We have to keep "doing" and this eventually will help us feel better about ourselves and build confidence. ("endurance produces character").

As we begin to feel better, we begin to hope again. (character produces hope)

Keep doing! Not because you feel like it, but because it leads us out of despair.

These are difficult times, but trusting that God is with us in our suffering, and God is within us as we move through our struggles to find a new hope will help us not become overwhelmed by despair. And perhaps, will help us discover new hope that can lead us to a new day!

Keep breathing and keep doing.

Roger

RAINBOWS – A Reflection by Rev. Jon Visitacion (March 26, 2020)



I will be honest with you...It has been difficult being a chaplain in the hospital these past few days. Many hospitals are getting ready if/when there will be a surge of patients. These past few days have been a combination of preparation and really deciding the role of spiritual care in the hospital, and the risk of having “residents” in the hospital. We have been bracing for the decision that we may not be asked to be in the main hospital building, and if we could wrap our heads around the idea of providing spiritual care by telephone from our offices. But this gray area of waiting for a decision has been difficult for me to just wait while patients and staff are getting more anxious in the hospital.

After waiting for three days and brainstorming with my colleagues what spiritual care could look like, I get a text message from the chaplain who was on-call. It was a picture of a beautiful rainbow, full and vibrant that seemed to stretch over the hospital and over the entire bay. It was the only thing to bring color and brilliance in the last few days, and it seemed to give me a breath of life. Soon, more pictures of rainbows came from my colleagues who were at home, and the group of us shared these photos in joy.

This afternoon we were told that chaplain residents will not be entering the hospital due to the risk of COVID-19. And as difficult as it is to hear this news, I am reminded that rainbows can still come and bring beauty to gloomy skies and hope for a tomorrow.



Grace and peace be with you all. Amen.

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, Patricia Orr, Ray Narimatsu, and Rev. Mariellen Sawada Yoshino.

Other Notes:

1. Update – The General Conference of the United Methodist Church has been postponed until 2021. The specific dates have not been set.