

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Each day seems to bring more news that can create uneasiness in our minds. To try to retain some sense of normalcy, many of us are probably attempting to keep some routine in our lives. This may include: getting up and eating at the same time, connecting with family and friends via telephone or computer, doing laundry on the same day, engaging in hobbies, etc... All of these can be helpful activities at a time when our lives may seem out of our control.

While many of my pastoral duties continue as before--participating in Text Study with area ELCA pastors (now via ZOOM), researching and writing sermons, proofing bulletins, emailing council members and other parishioners, connecting with confirmation mentors and students--the means for connecting with others has changed. It is difficult for us not to have "face-time" with each other on Sundays. It is difficult for us not to be close to our church family and to connect with one another in-person.

One of the things that I have added to my routine is going out for walks most every day. While this was not part of my regular routine prior to "Safer at Home," the health benefits are well worth it. The fresh air, Vitamin D on the sunny days, and increased exercise provide a reprieve from feeling cooped-up inside. The walks provide an additional time for prayer, too.

This reminds me of an activity that I would like to share with you. It is called a "Prayer Walk." To participate, you walk around the village or your neighborhood, stop outside homes, offices, and other buildings, and pray for the people who live or work in these places. When you see people in their yards, you can call to them from a distance, but you can also pray for them. When you see animals, you can pray for their well-being. At the park, you can pray for all of God's creation and for those who use the park. When you see the fire hydrants and other safety equipment, you can pray for the emergency responders, healthcare workers, and others who are helping to protect us. When you get to the church, you can pray to God for "the well-being of the church of God and for the unity of all."

Yesterday, I saw an announcement from Tomah Health. They are inviting people to sew masks for their staff members. This opportunity to provide assistance seemed like something that people with sewing skills at St. Paul's might be interested in, so I passed the information along to Carolyn to share with the W-ELCA ladies. She suggested that others in our church family might like to participate, too. Please look for more details to come.

While no human being can know how long we will be apart from one another, we know that God is with us now and always. May this time of separation from one another be a time of sharing what God has given us--faith, hope and love.

Blessings and peace,

Pastor Cathy