

Caring for Ourselves In These Times

This not being able to go to work is more work than going to work. Pastors, Elders, Deacons, Christian Educators, Teachers, Organists, Youth Ministers, Campus Ministries, Camp Directors, Members of Christ's Body are scrambling to figure out how to communicate, teach, witness, minister, live Christ from a distance. It has been a sharp learning curve as we master recording services, leading virtual Session meetings, holding Skype staff meetings, leading Zoom Bible Studies, making online lessons and ministering to one another. This is not an easy feat for a vocational discipline which is grounded in face-to-face, hand-in-hand and shoulder-to-shoulder walking together ministry. Many of us feel uncomfortable, ill-equipped and unsure that we are doing enough.

I suspect this is what Jesus' disciples were feeling during the days following Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. In the resurrection appearances, Jesus provided some guidance for them as he set boundaries with Mary (John 20:17), as he sent the disciples as a team (John 20:21-22), as he appeared to Thomas (John 20: 27-28), and as he walks with the disciples in daily life (John 21). We can learn from these appearances as well.

Set Boundaries – Yes, when we signed up for this ministry, we expected to get a call in the middle of the night from someone in crisis. That is what Christ calls us to. But the use of technology makes everything a 24/7 experience whether urgent or not. It means we can work 24/7 as well. Emails and texts can be sent whenever and checked whenever. Information can be uploaded and downloaded whenever. This technology puts us on high alert at all times. We are always thinking "I should be doing or I should be checking." In some ways everything becomes a crisis. With this type of thinking, the physical and spiritual bodies wear out. So set a routine by creating office hours, letting coworkers know when they should contact you, defining crises and the crisis mode of contact. Make virtual meetings productive. My observation is that technology has decreased meeting planning and productivity. I am amazed at how right after a meeting the emails and texts fly, when those issues should have been dealt with in the meeting. What we used to call "street corner Session meetings" and would warn against are now made even more alluring and dangerous through social media. So stick to the work boundaries established. Maybe it is just not the right time to "hold on".

Work Together – We do not each need to invent our own wheel. This is a great time to partner with another church, pastor or Christian Educator maybe even cross denominationally. During these last three weeks, my daughter (also a Certified Christian Educator) and I have shared more materials, children’s sermons, ideas, theological thoughts, technology and writings than we have before. It has eased the problem-solving and the workload. We have learned a lot from each other and had fun too. As disciples were sent as a team, so are we. We often forget that.

Take Time with God -- God wants to meet us individually caring for our personal and spiritual needs as the unique individuals God created us to be. God will take time with each of us as he did with Thomas. But we, as Thomas did, need to interact with Jesus. Thomas reached out and placed his hand in Jesus’ hand and side, we can reach out in prayer, reading God’s Word, singing praise and looking for God’s presence in our lives.

Take Time for Daily Life -- Jesus walks with us daily in all we do. Time with family, time making a meal for loved ones, time doing dishes, time changing a diaper can be time spent with Jesus. These times are as important to us, to our families, to God as our paid ministry.

“Be Still and Know that I am God.” Psalm 46:10

Blessings to You All,
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