

## ***First and Center***

Pastor's Blog

March 25, 2020



Despite the rather naïve hopes of the President, it is slowly becoming clear to many of us that we will not be able to gather in our flower-festooned sanctuary to celebrate that Christ is Risen and return the Alleluias. In the several clergy groups of which I am a part, in-person and online, I cannot begin to tell you the pain and grief that causes us. For Christians, Easter is without question the most joyous, hope-filled, wonder-immersed service of the year, and for clergy, sheer ecstasy.

To think of celebrating Easter alone in a sanctuary with a computer is so very hard.

There's a lot of grief and loss out there right now. Our youngest son has lost the rest of his senior year in college, his senior vocal recital, his final time with friends, probably his graduation ceremony. I know a high school senior who has lost prom and multiple other rites of passage. I know people who have lost jobs and had to go on unemployment. Some have had deaths in their families and lost the chance to mourn by their sides. Our homeless neighbors have lost the certainty of regular meals, shelters, places to shower, and wash clothing.

I believe that grief will not be the final word in these times, but I also believe it is important to acknowledge it. Sometimes folk say, “Well, it could be worse. I could get the virus and die.” Well, yes. But knowing that someone is worse off than you are does not negate your grief.

Be gentle with yourself. Acknowledge your loss. Take some time to assess what you have not lost that holds you up. Make sure to take time to immerse yourself in those things that give you hope and strength. Don’t feel guilty for feeling bad.

Paul reminded the Roman church about what they ultimately had to hold onto in times of loss. “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, [nor coronavirus, I might add], nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” You know, the one we celebrate on Easter as having lost everything and yet bursting alive from the tomb. When all the be-flowered sanctuaries and rousing organ music and egg hunts are lost, still, Christ rises. Now, that’s something to hold on to.

~ Rev. Shelly Stackhouse,  
Transitional Minister