

BEING COMMUNITY IN DIASPORA

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Well, my good friends, these times are in God's hand.

I was talking to a lay leader from a church who said her congregation was struggling on how to be community when the group cannot gather. My first thought was protecting the community as we run to our burrows and nests, so we have a community to gather once the danger is over. I know how hard it is to be apart from one another. So I have some suggestions (and pardon my slip into humor off and on) on how to still be community.

I think we are right in cancelling worship services. I am not sure we can manage getting a service online for you this Sunday. There are some alternatives for prayers at your regularly scheduled times (which I hope happens more than Sunday mornings). Type <https://www.missionstclare.com/english/> into your web browser.

Put your cursor on the ICON and you will be selecting Morning or Evening Prayer as it would be for today, with assigned readings, Canticles, prayers and the like. You have the option of opening up the music and singing along, though if you are a little intimidated with singing alone while sitting on the couch, you can put in ear buds and listen to someone else singing.

You can use the Prayer Book, in your very own hands, following orders of service for any time of day. Need a prayer book and don't have one at home? We can deliver one, if you ask. Or tpe this: <https://www.bookofcommonprayer.net/contents>

Scroll down and find Miscellaneous Content...open Prayers and Thanksgivings. Whoa, you can pray for a whole bunch of things there! I hope to have the prayer list we use on Sundays sent to every email address. If you have additions, send them to Renee Koren. Or send them to me and I will forward them. Subject line should read Prayers of the People Addition

Write an email to a few of your friends and ask them for best comfort food recipes. We will need to eat, even though we are not gathering at the Table for awhile.

Serve a nice bottle of wine with dinner, using homemade bread as one of the carbo-laden sides. This is not a re-enactment of Eucharist in church but a thoughtful remembrance that all tables are gathering places and holy in their own right (rite?)

Read a book. How often we have pined for time to follow our cherished hobbies and interests. If books are not your thing, something else may come to mind.

Take a walk. We are talking social distancing here, not home as isolation ward. Just keep your hands washed and keep your hands to yourself (avoiding the face thing, of course).

Listen to music. Sit in the sun or a comfy chair, appropriate beverages, music and close your eyes, even if you fall asleep this is better than being awash in anxiety 24 hours a day.

Sit down with a piece of paper and a pen in hand. **Write to someone using that pen.** Send a note or letter to someone who may be more than just a little isolated right now. Or pick up the phone. Everyone I know has someone in his/her life that does not use a computer. Social isolation is harder for people who have no digital footprint.

Read all the funny posts and watch animal GIF links on Facebook or elsewhere on the internet. The news will continue to inform you: Find something to bring down blood pressure/rising levels of anxiety. I am fond of puppy/kitty YouTube myself.

Spring cleaning is good. Okay, maybe not.

Yard work, if you are up for it, tells the planet you still love her. It is time to start flower and veggie seedlings for planting outside in a couple of weeks. Now is a good time to plant.

Write up your Advanced Directives to be a help to your family in harder times. Yep, that's right, you can help those whom you love by directing them to do certain things for you when you are unable to do them for yourself and death approaches. You can find resources online by typing in "advanced directives guidance" or Five Wishes. There are many sites available including some that are just fill-in-the-blank kinds of things. No, this is not gruesome; it is our fear of not knowing the future that keeps us from doing this work.

Other things: Make phone calls and check in with each other. Let me know if you find folks who have particular needs where the church can be helpful. If you want me to visit, you have to tell me you want me to visit. And I will.

Get tested if/when the tests are available. (Sorry, that was snarky.)

Stay home, monitor your health.

We are not dismembering the Body of Christ by staying home. Every time you think of each other you are "remembering the gathered community" in the best way possible and the safest way at the moment.

God bless us, every one.

Kathy+