



April 2, 2020

Dear Partners in Ministry,

**How goes it with your soul?** This is the question John Wesley used to open each of his meetings. This simple question allows for the opportunity to go beyond the pleasantries of answering “how are you?”. It asks for a vulnerable examination of your heart. Over the past week I’ve been using this question as part of my morning prayer. It offers me a chance to uncover some of the fears and insecurities that I may have been repressing throughout the day as well as the joys that have gotten lost in the shuffle of two parents both trying to work at home, with two kids.

If you had a Lenten spiritual practice this year you might find yourself in this same boat. It got dropped. Probably for no good reason other than your life became hectic at a faster and higher rate than you might have expected. As we prepare to step into Holy Week, with all signs pointing to continuing our social distancing weeks beyond Easter, let us not allow the anxiety that seems to fill every molecule of air we breathe be the focus of our attention. May we all be reminded that we too still venture with Jesus towards the path of transformation and new life. A road that wasn’t easy 2,000 years ago and a road that isn’t easy in our current condition. We know this journey is best done with a heavy diet of prayer. Prayer that gives us strength in our suffering as well as opening our hearts to the suffering of others.

I share with you a spiritual practice that was brought to my attention by the Rev. Bernice Parker-Jones, pastor, Faith Presbyterian Church, Washington, DC.

*COVID-19 has left many people feeling isolated with diminishing faith and hope. The coronavirus is affecting our children, youth, and young adults, but it’s having an exponential impact on our senior population.*

*Single senior citizens are feeling isolated. Those in nursing homes and assisted living places are in forced self-quarantine with menus and food being left at their doors. Some are being advised that if they leave their facility, they can’t return until the COVID-19 crisis has ended. Understandably, all these measures are for their own good; nevertheless, it doesn’t relieve the pain of loneliness and sadness. We are all hurting from social distancing, but none like our seniors who live alone. I imagine they’re feeling helpless, perhaps even discouraged and abandoned. While some are able to gather using Zoom or other social media platforms, others do not have this luxury or know-how.*

*Our prayer is that God will soon restore us to a time when we can gather again in face-to-face fellowship with one another.*

*In the meantime, I would like to call everyone in our Presbytery to dedicate a time of fasting and communal prayer for strength and continued faith for all who are affected until this virus passes over. We are asking all of us to spend an hour each day (8:00 A.M. - 9:00 A.M.) praying Psalm 27 and to fast one meal a day (as much as your health allows) as we call upon our merciful and loving God for strength and courage to endure. Pray especially for the elderly who live alone. Pray for those who have lost love ones and are unable to say their last goodbyes. Pray for each other's spiritual, mental and physical strength and that we will keep the faith.*

Friends continue your good and faithful work. Offer yourselves and those around you an abundance of grace. Take stock of how it goes with your soul as you journey with Christ to and beyond the cross.

*John*

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