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*"...that they may be  
encouraged in heart  
and united in love..."*  
Colossians 2.2 (NIV)

November 2020

Dear Friends,

A few days ago, I made my first home visit since March. We were blessed with a beautiful fall day. The temperature was nearly 80. The breezes were blowing. The trees were a gorgeous spectrum of yellows and golds. The reason for my visit: my member, in her 90's, has been diagnosed with dementia. Her two fears are the she will end up dependent on others and that she will never get to worship in the sanctuary again.

We talked for nearly an hour about her life story and how faith has played such a key role. She was a young girl, one of six children, when her mother was diagnosed with dementia. While her father worked the fields, she cared for her five siblings and her mother. Years later, she was her husband's caregiver... and then her sister's.

As our time drew to a close, I pulled out my plastic box complete with hand sanitizer, rubber gloves, and pre-sealed Communion cups. There, six feet apart, we prayed, read Scripture, and shared in our Lord's Supper.

As I was getting ready to leave, she offered, "You know, Pastor, you probably have never had Communion in someone's driveway before. But it has been the best day ever, one that I will never forget."

It is the little things. I have to confess, a home visit was not something I was looking forward to. My greatest fear, during this Covid season, has been to carry the virus to someone, to our daycare or the nursing home connected to our building. I have avoided places and groups of people for fear of being a carrier. But that hour was a sacred hour. And as often the case, she was as much a blessing to me as I to her. On my drive home, I stopped to appreciate the fall day giving thanks for this Child of God and her faithfulness even in the midst of her fear.

This year we are trying new things with our Confirmation class. We have spent this first month using Sparkhouse's TBD lessons on prayer: Does Prayer Change Me? and Does Prayer Change God? We talked about that "voice" that we often ignore and I encouraged the class to practice listening. The next day, I heard that "voice" as I found a picture that read: Be daring. Be different. Be original. Be You! In response, I texted one of my middle schoolers adding a note "That 'voice' told me you might need an extra prayer today!" with some emojis. Little did I know, at that moment, she was with a teacher upset over a grade, her parent's divorce and life in general.

It is the little things. This year is ending so very different from what any of us imagined a year ago. If your congregation is like mine, conversations, hard conversations, are taking place about Thanksgiving and Christmas Eve service, Sunday School programs and other activities. My people are disappointed that we are not worshipping in the sanctuary. The church down the road is still worshipping online and in the parking lot.

And so, I have to remember, it is the little things. Those passing blessings that we are often too busy or too distracted to notice might just be the thing we need the most to encourage us on this journey.

Let me encourage you to slow down just a little. I know that is easier said than done. But I also know I need to hear that as well. Slow down just a little and discover ways to appreciate these next few weeks in spite of Covid and last-minute changes. Slow down and take some time to connect with individuals who may need a word of encouragement. Because it is too easy to get overwhelmed with recording services and Zoom meetings, and making multiple plans “in case this happens”. We need to model what we teach and preach. We need to be filled so we can pour out God’s love to our flocks.

It is the little things. May you continue to be blessed with things little and grand as you are a blessing to others.

Have a blessed Thanksgiving and a Holy Advent beginning.

In Christ’s service,

Pastor Juli Lejman-Guy, President