

5th Sunday of Easter

1 Peter 2:2-10

John 14:1-14

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Holy Spirit Lutheran Church, Edmonton

May 10, 2020

8th Sunday of Social Distancing

Jesus says, “don’t let your hearts be troubled.” And he means it.

How applicable those words are to us today when the world has changed! We can no longer sun our toes on a southern beach, or go out to enjoy a beer with friends, we can’t even gather in our own homes or gather to celebrate some of the most important times in our lives – and church – do you remember all the things we did?

We gathered for worship and times of fellowship. I can remember times when there were so many boots in the hallway it was like an obstacle course. There were campfires with the youth and Sunday lessons with our confirmands. We learned from one another and built imaginary castles or puzzles or hats. How many times have we affirmed the ministry of welcome and inclusion God has given us? It’s brought us together and to parades for the whole city to see.

But today, our lives are different, filled with longing for the outside world and all the places and ways and people we so freely connected with. We identify one another by our eyes because our smiles and the familiar curve of a friend’s lip is hidden. We grieve that we can’t say farewell to our loved ones. Our kitchen tables are quiet and we’re dusting off board games. We’ve upped our game learning how to meet online, seeing one another in tiny squares as if we are separated from our bodies. The sanctuary transitioned into a studio.

Today the roadway outside the church is eerily empty of traffic. A sign on the door says “stay home.” And the time for worship on our sign is covered over. The little church that once was so welcoming now is different. Empty. And today we hear Jesus reminding us, “don’t let your hearts be troubled.” Easier said than done. But this isn’t the first time Jesus has been challenged on his promises.

This year Holy Spirit is 55 years old. This place was started with a dream and vision, hope and determination, faith and calling. It called the best out of us as we learned and nurtured one another and brought our tithes and offerings in gratitude to God. We've been here for a speck of time in God's history, another generation filled with anxiety when things go awry. But if God was here for us back then, God is here with us now, in every home, every tear, every dinner table, every worship service – and one day – one day this will be over.

We will be different. And we will still miss what once was. Yet, let's understand that we are discovering new ways to build - not just bathrooms, but relationships! We are figuring out new pathways to learn and to meet and to be the church. We've ventured into Youtube, learning how to record services and invite you to participate. You've learned new ways to support God's ministry – in fact we are learning again how to be God's people in a hurting world. All of those moments when we gathered for potlucks, for annual meetings, summer barbeques, garden blessings, all the times we were brought together for worship – celebrating our confirmands, our welcome, the wonderful gift of Holy Communion, Christmas, the miracle of Easter, the times of goodbye with loved ones... are still there. And one day, we will laugh again and we will look back and realize how much we've learned. We will sit and tell our children or grandchildren about it all and we will say to them, "don't worry, every year spring comes, God will always love you." And you will know that deep in your heart, God is love and that you have become love yourself. You will know that you are the church where ever you are.

Amen.