

MARCH 18, 2020

AGAPE FROM AFAR

Adjusting to life amidst Coronavirus

A WORD
FROM
PASTOR
JILL

As a way to remain connected during this time apart, I will be putting together a weekly newsletter with a reflection based on the upcoming Sunday scripture passage. I hope that by taking a few moments to reflect on the Word of God and pray, we can feel grounded and connected to God and to one another during this uncertain time. -Pastor Jill



One of the lectionary passages for this week is Psalm 23.

This well-known passage brings many people comfort in troubling times especially verse 4 that says, "Even though I walk through, the darkest valley, I will fear no evil; for you are with me." During this time many of us are living in fear-fear of getting sick, fear of running out of supplies, fear about our finances, fear about the health of our loved ones. And while those fears are real and important to be named, we need to focus on the second half of the verse-"For you are with me." When you feel fearful, remember God is with you. Also remember God is with your neighbor. God is with our healthcare workers and first responders. God is with our leaders and teachers. No matter what fears surround us, God is with us. Despite our fears, may we find comfort in God's promise to be with us even in the scariest of times.

Take some time to reflect on Psalm 23 on the following pages.



Read the passage:

Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
God makes me lie down in green pastures;
God leads me beside still waters,
God restores my soul.
God leads me in right paths
for God's name's sake.
Even though I walk through
the darkest valley,
I will fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff – they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
You anoint my head with oil;
My cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
my whole life long.

Reflect:

1. When was the first time you remember hearing this passage?
Did you find it comforting?
2. Do you relate to God as a shepherd?
3. What other images of care-taking relate better for you?
4. What is this passage calling you to do today? This week?

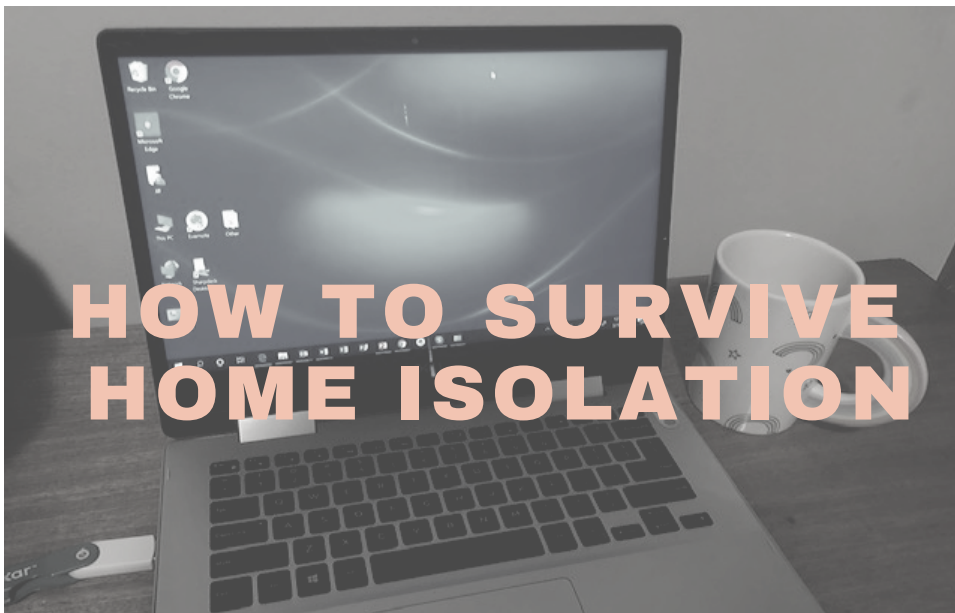
Pray:

O God, as we walk through this dark time we confess that we are fearful and anxious. We fear we will run out of food and basic necessities. We fear we will not have enough money. We fear that our anxiety will get the best of us. We fear we and others we love will get sick.

Forgive us when we become so self-consumed that we only focus on the dire situation and fail to see goodness around us. Today we pray that you will lead us to a still place where we can feel and know your presence. We pray that your promise is true, that you constantly pursue us with goodness and love, and that we are never alone. Amen.

(Prayer written by Rev. Kathy Dwyer)





Find ways to relieve stress—walk around the block, bake or cook, do a puzzle, read a book, take a bath, revive a forgotten hobby, exercise (YouTube has tons of videos), take a nap.

Take a break from the news—put down the phone, step away from the computer, turn off the t.v. Even if only for a short period of time, give it a break.

Communicate your needs with the people who are stuck at home with you. It's okay to initiate mandatory time apart in separate rooms. Allow more screen time. Lower your expectations of yourself and those you love.

Especially if you are alone, find ways to stay connected. All of us need to be reminded to stay connected to friends, family, neighbors and church members. Reach out by text, phone call, email, written letters or notes. Set up a virtual get together through FaceTime, Skype, or Google Hangouts.

What I have been

reading:

Unsheltered by Barbara Kingsolver

What I have been

listening to:

Sara Groves

When the Saints

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dgrt9OZSaXY)

[v=dgrt9OZSaXY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dgrt9OZSaXY)

What I've been

watching:

Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood (Mister Rogers Movie with Tom Hanks)

Please reach out to staff if you have a need. We continue the work of caring for one another by meeting physical, emotional and spiritual needs.

**First Church of
Lombard
220 S. Main Street
Lombard, IL 60148
630-629-2630**

info@firstchurchoflombard.org