



The Elim Scribe



THOUGHTS FROM PASTOR BRUCE

May and June are two of my most favorite months of the year. Days are longer. Temperatures are warmer. Flowers and trees are beautiful. Everything around us speaks of hope and new life. Even the birds seem cheerful! But this year is different. We may not want to deal with that, but it is reality.

June brings our third month of life during a pandemic. COVID-19 certainly does not define us, but it has definitely changed our world. Physical distancing, masks, washing our hands, sanitizing surfaces, ordering out instead of eating in—all these are things we have learned to deal with in the past couple of months.

There is debate on when and how to rejoin in “in-person worship,” with some leaders encouraging a return to houses of worship. Bishop Jim Gonia of the Rocky Mountain Synod, ELCA, in a recent email to all our pastors and churches has recommended strongly that we continue to worship through our digital format, continuing online worship services **through August and possibly even through the end of the calendar year**. ELCA presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton has the same message, as do many church leaders, local and national.

Two things seem to be affecting our view of how and when to attempt to return to “normal.” One is the ongoing reality that the virus is still with us. The risk—even in Utah—has not disappeared. The second is what might be called quarantine fatigue. We are already weary of being isolated and, in a sense, confined and defined by this virus.

Every day more Utahns are infected and impacted by COVID-19. We are “not New York” but the coronavirus has changed how we live and connect. Confined, we may be, however, don't let frustration define you. You are still a child of God, loved and cared for by God and by all of us. You can still find hope and see good things happening all around us. Fred Rogers (Mr. Rogers) quoted his mother as saying “when bad things happen, look for the heroes.” We are surrounded by heroes. WE are heroes—every time we choose to see and do the good, every time we hold back on our impatience and irritation, yielding to grace and mercy in caring for ourselves and those around us.

So, hang in there, dear loved one! Keep your perspective. Keep loving. Keep trusting. Keep your focus on the Author of our salvation and on our ability to share Jesus’ love and grace in innovative and creative ways.

We will get through this!

WHEN AND HOW TO RESUME WORSHIP

States are reopening. Some churches are cautiously regathering. Others are very reluctant to do so. We long to reconnect and get back to some sense of normal. We are weary of isolation and need human connections. However, normal has to be redefined. There is a continued need for caution. Here are some reasons:

- We still have no guaranteed test to show who has or who does not have the coronavirus.
- Many carriers of the virus are asymptomatic and can remain so for fourteen days before they realize they are infected.
- The virus is spread most effectively through speaking and singing. This is increased through the length of time spent together. Imagine being in a room with someone who smokes. It does not take long for the second hand smoke to fill the room and everyone be exposed to it. Passing gas—flatulation, or “farting” if you will—can also affect those within range. The risk is less when we are outside, but you have probably experienced both smells even outside. That illustrates how the virus can also be spread. Virus particles are passed through our breath, speaking, and singing in the same way. Masks reduce, but do not eliminate, the risk.
- The virus can also be spread through touching common surfaces—door knobs, bulletins, hymnals, offering plates, etc. - and then touching our faces.
- Most of our members are in the age range that is most at risk, and many also have underlying health issues that result in even greater risk.

A message from Vicar Lisa:

We are so thankful to everyone who has helped thus far with Online Worship by reading scripture. We hope you have enjoyed the videos Gloria produced and the music and message from Pastor Bruce. Please continue to visit Elim's website each week to see what's new and to join us in online worship.

OUTDOOR WORSHIP

Elim’s church council met recently and discussed the issue of how and when to move forward. It is dangerous and naive to feel that God would protect us as we gather. We need to be wise and consider what science tells us. We cannot be careless or cavalier. Because of that, returning to indoor worship is out of the question. That bothers me too, but it is a new reality, and our bishop and other leaders are very clear in their statements to us in that regard.

Even gathering for worship in an outdoor setting has its risks. If we are aware of those risks, we can deliberately work at minimizing them and care for each other. **Once we feel that it is safe**, we will gather for worship on our church lawn, weather permitting. However, as we do so, we will take these precautions.

- Physical distancing is mandatory. Place chairs a minimum of six feet apart, with the exception of family members sitting together. Some chairs will be provided; bring your own if you like. You may also remain in your car for the service.
- Wear a face mask. Your breath, or inhaling the breath of another, is the most effective way of passing on the virus. AND, we do not know who is, or is not, infected. Anyone can be asymptomatic and still be a carrier. Loving our neighbor—which Jesus calls us to do—should motivate us to caution.
- We will not do congregational singing or responsive readings. Even outside, spaced six feet apart, we can share each others' breath. The risk is minimized but not eliminated.
- Our outdoor **worship services will be much shorter** to minimize exposure, and we will **meet only twice each month**.
- Nearly all of us are in the “at risk” category because of our age. Quite a number of us also have underlying issues that make us even more vulnerable. So, to quote an old Royal Navy Chaplain I knew years ago, “have a care.” Think past your comfort zone!
- The church’s restrooms will be available.
- Sanitize/wash your hands, thoroughly and frequently. Avoid touching your face.

Utah’s infection rate is lower than much of the country, but we still have to be cautious. We are not out of the woods. We cannot eliminate all risks, but we can minimize them. We do not want to be governed by fear, yet God has also given us intelligence and the leading and guiding of His Spirit.

Miracles of Jesus - Karlene Widner

Biblical scholars and archaeologists, especially in Israel, have collaborated to provide context for various miracles recorded in the Bible. In "Understanding Jesus' Miracles," Jari Fossum puts these miracles in two major categories - healing and nature miracles.

The pool of Bethesda was the site where Jesus healed the paralyzed man. Considered one of the most important sites of Jesus' Galileo ministry and existing for 2000 years, its location had been a mystery. It is now associated with the site of a pool in the current Muslim Quarter, near the Church of St Anne and a gate called the Lion's (or St. Stephen's) Gate. Another story tells of Jesus curing the blind man at the pool of Siloam. During the reign of King Hezekiah, this pool was constructed in what is thought to have been the original site of Jerusalem, currently the City of David/Wadi Hilweh.

In the New Testament gospels, we find the story of a man who had been dominated by demons, which Jesus transferred into a herd of swine. They were driven over the hill, into the Sea of Galilee and drowned. In 1970, this area was excavated; it is near the town of Gergesa, the modern **Kursi**, close by the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. A monastery, basilica and chapel identify the traditional spot, an important destination for Christian pilgrims.

Professor C.R. Krahmalkov writes "truth is often only a matter of personal opinion or a test of scholarly perception put together as ... consensus." For more than 30 years historians and archaeologists have searched for the truth of the story of Exodus - as a folk tale, allegory, myth and more. Professor Zenat felt that the word of truth as written in the story of Exodus is the most difficult. He and others feel that there is some Biblical meaning, but the plagues happened in the form of natural events. Many, trying to tie parts into Egyptian history, believe that it had to have happened 200 years later. Some go so far as claiming it has to be myth. Professor Bernard Ball reminds us that the narratives should not be treated as an historical account of what actually occurred in those days.

Congratulations! to Hunter Nahley, graduating (virtually) from Layton High School, 5-26-20. Hunter's graduation ceremony can be viewed on Layton High School's YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?>

