



May 1, 2020

Grace and peace to you, scattered saints of FPC,

As we enter Week 7 of our Covid Quarantine, the word of the week around our house is *food*. Food has become our most frequent topic of conversation. “What shall I make for dinner? What do we have? Let’s find a new recipe. What do we need? How can we get it? Where shall we shop? What time shall we go? What restaurants wear masks and glove and practice social distancing for takeout -- and how far ahead do we need to order if we want to eat before 10:00? How can I avoid chocolate? (*answer: by grabbing the popcorn. Excuse me a minute, I’ll be right back...*)

Food. It’s what we are all thinking about, we suspect. John Krasinski was thinking about food on this week’s episode of SGN, “Some Good News” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o1zlgTwENPg>).

And when we aren’t thinking about our own food, many of us are thinking about neighbors who don’t have the choices and resources to get food that we do. Or the workers in the food chain who labor night and day to keep us supplied with food. Or the ministries which strain to offer food to hungry folks under strange constraints: if you have a hankering for a miracle, look into stories of the efforts in every part of the world to bring food to hungry strangers.

Here is news from Dr. Reeta and Hari Rao, our mission partners in SNEHA mission in Dehradun, India:

*Over the last few weeks, SNEHA has actively involved in distributing basic food necessities (Rice, Lentils, Flour, Cooking Oil, Salt, Potatoes, Soya), to more than 550 adults & children through our personal contribution as a family. Many of these families are of students who are currently studying at SNEHA while others are just one of many such families in the marginalised community which has grown to over 30,000 people, who are now surviving on one meal a day and in some cases one meal in 2-3 days.*

*After witnessing the work that SNEHA was doing in the immediate slum community, many local leaders and prominent politicians reached out to SNEHA asking us to provide help in other parts of the city. Several staff came forward to contribute from their meagre salaries to render help towards other needy communities. We were able to help 55 more families of up to 4 - 6 members from another slum community in Dehradun. In addition to this, our community and health workers have been constantly reiterating the importance of hygiene, face masks and social distancing*

Food. As life is whittled down to essentials, food is laid bare as the most essential ingredient of life. We are not alone in imagining that the first thing we will do with our loved ones when the quarantine is lifted is gather around some table and share a feast.

Certainly that is the first thing our church family will do when we can all gather again. Let’s take the Strawberry fest, the Deacons’ picnic, the Lenten suppers, the Christmas breakfast, and put them all together to have one gigantic Homecoming Feast!

But the first table we will gather around will be the Table in the sanctuary; the first feast we will share will be the Lord's Supper. This Sunday will be the first Sunday of the month, a day when we would under former normal circumstances would be a communion Sunday. This Sunday will have bread on the Table, and the cup will be filled. We will gaze upon these material things, and call to mind how God satisfies our deepest hungers and provides our most essential needs.

We will gaze, but we will not partake. This is a meal to be shared as a body, the body of Christ. So the Session has decided, at least for the time being, that until we can all partake, we will quietly pause and contemplate the Table of the Lord. These visible, tangible signs of bread and cup are elements God chooses to bestow invisible spiritual gifts. By the Holy Spirit's use of them, they nourish the life and faith of the body of Christ.

But even when we cannot partake of these gifts of bread and cup, the gracious presence and promises they point to are not withheld from us. God is still with us; God's promises are still sure; Christ's life is still poured out for us, and poured into us by the Holy Spirit. We can seek these life-saving, life-giving spiritual realities in our homes in other ways, through worship and the Word, through prayer and service. God's provision for our spirits is not limited or bound to these material gifts of bread and cup.

Yet, while we await the return to the feast at the Table, it might be helpful to borrow a spiritual practice from our Jewish neighbors. For thousands of years, every week at the Sabbath meal, wherever they have sat at table, alone or with loved ones, in homes or in exile or in hiding, they have taken a cup and lifted it to bless God, and to ask God's blessing upon them: "what shall we render to the Lord, for all of God's blessing to us?" asks the psalmist. "We will lift up the cup of salvation and bless the Lord."

Picture all of us choosing a cup from our cupboards and setting it aside to be used for a sacred purpose for this time. Picture all of us, in our sheltering places, each Sabbath Sunday in quarantine, sitting at table, voicing how God has blessed us and what God has provided for us. Picture all of us, each in our own way, lifting the cup to bless the Lord, and to ask God's continued blessing upon us, and those we love, even those whom we find hard to love.

If we do this, then perhaps our preoccupation with food will open a fount of praise which will be a source of blessing not only to God, but to our households as well.

All that being said, we have been talking about things other than food this week! Follow the links below to be fed by the creative efforts of Cindy and some hand bell players, Evan Deegan, Amy Shutt, and Tim Allen.

The Session has voted to set up a **Covid Disaster Relief fund**. Some of you have said that in addition to your weekly offering to the ongoing work of the church, you would like to offer a portion or all of your stimulus checks to be used to distribute to people who have been negatively impacted by the virus. A task force is working on establishing guidelines for the use of the funds. If you would like to contribute, you can send a check to the church with Covid Disaster fund on the memo line -- or you can watch for the online link that will be set up on the Give section of the website.

**The Praying the Scriptures circle (lectio divina) will meet at 7:00 on Tuesday** (note the change in time) -- if you are interested in this time of meditation, contact Kerry and she will send the Zoom link.

**The Work Check-in Group will meet at 10:00 a.m. on Thursday** -- anyone interested in companionship and prayer as you go through employment /unemployment difficulties, get in touch with Carter for a Zoom link.

**Confirmation meets on Sunday at 12:30.** Who will win the take-out lunch of your choice this week? Do your homework and get ready!

**Mission Partner:** SNEHA ministries, Dehradun, India

As grain that is scattered is gathered into one bread,  
may the Spirit of the Risen Christ gather us into one body,  
though we are scattered one from the other,

Kerry and Carter

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### **Links for Sunday and the Week Ahead**

[House Church Order of Service and Hymns for 5.3](#)

[Kids Coloring Page](#)

[Family Page](#)

[Young Children & Worship Video](#)

[Check out Evan Deegan's Lego Parable!](#)

Online Retreat: [Contained by Hope](#)

Hand bell Choir: [For the Beauty of the Earth](#)

### **Sing with Mrs B! Links**

[Cherub Choir](#)

[Celtic Choir](#)