

April 22, 2020

Dear Members and Friends of The Old Scotch Church,

In the Deacon meeting last Saturday, I had my timing off and told them we'd been calling folks at home for 6 weeks, when it had in fact been 4 weeks. As each week goes by, it seems to be easier to lose track of time. Sometimes it's the day of the week, or the hour of the day, or how long it's been since we last went out somewhere.

We could easily want to push back against the time and space we're in. But I'd like to reframe this shelter time and space to consider how each might be a gift to us. Time and space every seven days is, in fact, the gift of Sabbath. Some of us now have the privilege of extra time and space each day. Some of us are working harder than ever, ready for some time and space.

The general rule of Sabbath I've tried to keep over the years is to walk away from email, and to think about ways that move me to pray and play, which are two arenas I find renewing. So, in the spirit of Sabbath-keeping, I'd like us to consider: How might we take these gifts of space and time for something we've wanted to do? Maybe that means getting to that project we've put off for years. Maybe it means widening our time of prayer. Maybe we join the forces of yard beautification, or go weed at OSC. Maybe we contact someone isolated and do a distance project together. I don't know what this time and space opens for you, but God knows, and I'm inviting you to partner with God's work in you.

And if you know of someone who's tight on time and space in this Covid situation, like a frontline worker or essential business employee or a teacher, I ask: How might we take these gifts to offer to someone who doesn't have them right now? A quick google of thank you options for frontline workers will give you thank you note/gift options. Have you thanked a teacher lately, or sent a thank you email to the school? Might you both support a local business and public servants by ordering a delivered cake saying 'thank you' for your local fire/police station? Or dinner delivered for your child's teacher? Or take on the widow's yard on the block? Maybe our space and time is what we can give to another.

As a bit of inspiration, the next page is a picture and poem to help us consider these gifts of space and time we've been given in these weeks and months. May we receive and engage them well.

I've intentionally held off on sending this week's pastoral letter for a day so I could inform you of decisions Session made last night at our April Session meeting. To begin with, Session voted to affirm the recommendation of the Worship Task Force to suspend in-person worship for May 3, 10, and 17. Our Session will follow Oregon guidelines on gatherings as we assess when we can gather, and our next meeting on May 12 will consider Sunday worship after May 17. Online services will continue to be offered, accessible through our website (www.oldscothchurch.org). When we DO get to gather again, we'll have more paved parking at the church, and Scotch Church Road will be open, so we'll want to cross with safety in mind. Next week's Aspire (sent out on April 28-29) will fill out details of what's been happening at The Old Scotch Church.

Grace and peace,
Pastor Tracie



Pandemic

What if you thought of it
as the Jews consider the Sabbath—
the most sacred of times?
Cease from travel.
Cease from buying and selling.
Give up, just for now,
on trying to make the world
different than it is.
Sing. Pray. Touch only those
to whom you commit your life.
Center down.

And when your body has become still,
reach out with your heart.
Know that we are connected
in ways that are terrifying and beautiful.
(You could hardly deny it now.)

Know that our lives
are in one another's hands.
(Surely, that has come clear.)
Do not reach out your hands.
Reach out your heart.
Reach out your words.
Reach out all the tendrils
of compassion that move, invisibly,
where we cannot touch.

Promise this world your love—
for better or for worse,
in sickness and in health,
so long as we all shall live.

—Lynn Ungar