

Flattening the curve an opportunity for unique ways to be together

The Reverend Canon Nancy Ford , Deacon / Times Colonist

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“Flatten the curve” is the Covid-19 mantra. We have been watching in amazement as new and even more drastic measures are taken each day. Does one dare to have hope in the midst of so much fear?

Hope has always been at the centre of Christianity. This hope does not negate the fear or anxiety resident in each of us. In the gospels it is almost a relief when we see examples of the disciples showing that fear is their default response when challenged with something different or unexpected. They seem to be slow to realize that with Jesus there is always compassion and hope. Today, we like them, are

faced with fear and the unexpected.

Perhaps it is not coincidental that as the spread of the virus has grown, we in the church have been burrowing down into our Lenten preparations. We have been focused on our traditions and the journey to Jerusalem, the cross, and the empty tomb. Now suddenly we will not be gathering for worship for the foreseeable future. We will not meet to make palm crosses, nor share coffee hour or even attend choir practices. Flowers will remain uncut; pews will gather dust and study groups will no longer congregate for discussion. What to do?

We may not be able to gather, but could this be an opportunity to explore unique ways of being together?

It could be understood that we are being given the gift of time. Now we can peel back layers of inattention brought on by our busy lives and enter into the spaciousness that nurtures the renewal of our souls. However, this does not mean we should isolate into a version of the monastic cell for the duration.

Teilhard de Chardin described hope as living into a fullness of spirituality. He writes that it “is the ground of ultimate connectedness where mystical traditions intersect.” It is “the breathing together of all things.” This breathing together acknowledges individual isolation yet affirms the deeply human need to be connected. Being connected can take any number of forms from the mystical to the practical.

When we read gospel depictions of Jesus’ life as he moves closer to his palm strewn walk into Jerusalem, we have an opportunity to reflect on the dynamics of fear and hope. Might we draw others into a similar meditation?

Email or other technological connections could be used. What favourite books or poems might open up the conversation? What of the use of the telephone call to check in and begin/continue conversations on the dynamics of hope and fear in daily life?

A caution: these conversations should never be concerned with answers. Differences must be respected. The focus is on the importance of questions and the doors they invariably open. Fear is to be respected and heard. One must listen without judgement, reassured by the knowledge that hope and love receive fear and transform it. Compassion was Jesus’ way in the face of fear and anger. These conversations might even shine light on what was hitherto hidden in the shadows. This is one way of breathing together.

Prayer is another form of breathing together. At its most basic, prayer is an outlook, a sustained energy, a mindful awareness and a compassionate caring. It is the very act of prayer which draws us into community.

May the hope we embrace and the compassion we embody drive away fear.



The Reverend Canon Nancy Ford, Deacon, is the Anglican Director of Deacons for the Diocese of British Columbia and Deacon to the City of Victoria out of Christ Church Cathedral.

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