

**Pastoral Update—April 24 , 2020**

*God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Psalm 46:1*



A sign of hope projected on the Matterhorn, Zermatt, Switzerland: **#hope**  
*“Never lose hope in these difficult times and orient yourself to the light of the Matterhorn.”*

**“Grief & Hope Intertwined”**

I’m taken by the Matterhorn project’s solidarity with all who are suffering and gratitude to those helping overcome the crisis. They noted that the whole world is affected, and we are in this together.

This project encourages hope but acknowledges the pain of this pandemic. It holds together the grief we are experiencing and the hope we hang onto. I have certainly tried to be as positive as possible during this crisis. Yet, if you asked me how I am doing, the brutally honest answer would be paradoxical: overwhelmed yet energized, anxious, yet hopeful. It depends on the day or the hour. It is very important to acknowledge the loss and grief we have all experienced in one extreme or another. It is important to give space and time to let our feelings of loss and disappointment resonate and process. It’s ok and perfectly possible to feel sad, mad, and frustrated while also feeling hopeful and trusting God too.

It’s good to grieve over what we have lost due to COVID-19. We have lost loved ones too soon, we have canceled weddings, we have lost the ability to gather with friends and family, we have lost work and leisure activities, we have missed life milestones like prom and graduation, we have lost rituals of goodbyes and religious ceremonies. We miss each other and our daily routines. As we process and make space for our grief, we will go through all the stages of grief: denial, bargaining, anger, depression, and acceptance. We will experience all these and more as we learn and embrace an unexpected way of life.

We are in week 6 of what we originally termed “suspended” worship. But let’s face it. Worship is canceled. Meeting is canceled. School is canceled. It seems like 2020 is canceled. On a personal note, all of my travel plans: canceled. All of my continuing education: canceled. My dad’s 80<sup>th</sup> birthday party in Wisconsin: canceled. You get the picture. This is all true, and yet we still have so much to celebrate. So much hope to hang onto. Because life is more than all of these things. **Hope is not canceled. Faith is not canceled. Love is not canceled. Generosity is not canceled. Caring is not canceled.**

As Christians, we are equipped to face the paradox of grief and hope held together, as we walk with our Savior, Jesus Christ, whose death on the cross and resurrection to new life are held together as the rock of our faith. As the prophet Khalil Gibran, said, **“Joy and sorrow are inseparable, together they come and where one sits alone with you at the board remember that the other is asleep upon your bed.”** So we hold joy and sorrow, grief and hope in tension together. Be sad but don’t despair. Grief and loss are a part of our story as Christians, yet we persevere in the story of our faith that holds together the grief of the cross and the glory and hope of the Easter resurrection! The risen Lord made himself known to the disciples on Easter morning, and he makes himself known to us through his Word and our love.

**I want us to think about Desert Cross as a hope forward community.** We grieve, but not as those without hope. The Holy Spirit is present with us, comforting us in our tears, bolstering us with strength, leading us with vision as we move into the future together. We are one church with one Lord who gives us the one hope we can count on. I would transform the words of the Matterhorn project like this: **Never lose hope in these difficult times and orient yourself to the light of Christ.** He walks with us, guides us, and fills us with hope.

Hanging onto hope,  
 Pastor Andrea

P.S. Federal and local discussions are beginning about reopening the U.S. Desert Cross will continue to follow government, local health official, and synod recommendations for staying safe and healthy. Your leadership groups of Staff, Council, Chamber, and Finance teams will consult with each other to enact a safe plan for a “return to normal” once it is deemed appropriate to do so.