

Message from Robin+

There is a beautiful poem by John O'Donohue, found in his book, *Conamara Blues: Poems*, entitled "Before the Beginning". The first few lines are

*Unknown to us, there are moments*

*When crevices we cannot see open*

*For time to come alive with beginning.*



Doesn't it feel as if crevices are opening all around us these days? We don't see them until they have opened and then everything changes. Often, we define a crevice in a negative way, but sometimes they hold treasures. Maybe it's loose change down in the crunchy crevice under the sofa cushion, or that twenty-dollar bill you forgot you tucked into that hidden crevice in your wallet. Perhaps that unseen crevice that tripped you on your hike prevented you from a direct encounter with a snake. Sometimes new life can be found when crevices open up in our old life. I'm reminded of the tiny Johnny Jump Up flower that hid all winter in the crack in on my front porch, waiting to delight me with new life when warm weather returned.

The crevices that have opened up during this pandemic have forced us to stop and take note of things that were already changing in the Church and in the world. When we were unable to gather for worship we had to creatively figure out a new way to stay connected as a parish; we learned new skills, we learned how to Zoom, and mastered a new email format. We had a kind of unexpected and enforced time out to think about what is most important to us in our life together at Christ and Grace.

There are things we have lost during this time, and not everything will return to its former familiar pattern. Loss brings many reactions – denial, sadness, anger, and grief, just to name a few emotions. But we are people of the Resurrection who walk in the way of Jesus and expect new life to come. And friends, it is on the way!

It's likely that in a few more weeks we will be able to regather for worship in our beautiful church. We have missed so much about our building, and yet we have learned that our church is so much more than the building. The Church is the people, the Word of God, the prayers, the Body of Christ in worship, and the power of the Holy Spirit moving us to ministry beyond our walls.

When we return, things will be different. It might even be a bit disappointing for some of us. For a time, everyone will wear a mask, and we will not be able to sing together or receive communion, exchange the peace or pass the offering plate. There will be no programming in the building for adults, youth, or children until later. We won't be able to enjoy fellowship at coffee hour just yet either. These things will hopefully return in time. But we can regather in our holy space, see one another, listen to God's Word and pray together. All in all, it's a pretty amazing treasure to find in the crevice of pandemic we've endured since the second Sunday in Lent!

The Christ and Grace Regathering Team has been working hard to write our parish guidelines that must be approved by Bishop Haynes before we can return. Once approved we will share those guidelines with you so that everyone knows what to expect when attending worship in person. We are also very aware that many of us have existing health conditions that would make it unsafe for us to return just yet, and so we plan to continue providing our online worship service.

As the Regathering Team continues to prepare for our return, it's very important for us to let them know how many of us plan to return to worship right away, if we plan to wait until fall, or if we know that we are unable to return until a vaccine is available. Please, please complete the brief survey that is included in this week's eNews. Just click the link and complete – it's easy!

While we wait we are preparing the nave for worship by removing books and pew cushions that can provide surfaces for the virus to live, we are creating plans for entering and exiting the building safely, and making sure we have plenty of cleaning and disinfecting supplies, hand sanitizer, masks and gloves on hand.

We want to be sure we provide a safe place for those who can return to worship, knowing that this is how we love one another. It will be a strange and new worship experience for us, but God will be with us, showing us new ways to be the Church as we go forward together.

*I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?  
I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. Isaiah 43:19*