



# Beneath the Spires

## Staying Rooted in the Midst of Coronavirus

*"I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit,<sup>17</sup> and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love.<sup>18</sup> I pray that you may . . . know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."*

- Ephesians 3:16-19

By Pastor Joanne

As I write, the bell at the church is ringing. The Porter family has been ringing the bell at 7 each night to honor and celebrate the front line workers in the battle against this insidious coronavirus. Each night it's a reminder of the passing of another day amid a string of days that seem to all



run together. It's also a cue that the faith that's been nurtured within the four walls of the church is intended to reverberate throughout the community.

These are truly different days that we find ourselves in - and truly difficult days of isolation for our families, neighbors, country and the world. People are dying in hospitals without family and friends, unemployment is off

the charts, and farmers are dumping the harvests that could feed those who are now food insecure.

Many of us are staying at home as much as possible, keeping our physical distance, wearing masks and gloves when we go out to the grocery store or doctor's appointments.

Yet some don't believe what the scientists are saying

and, even more so, what the media is reporting. There are some grand conspiracy stories circulating about the virus being a bioweapon or a political ploy or that 5G cellphone towers are to blame.

The fear and anxiety in times like these can bring out the best or the worst in people; we may be inclined to put self before others - to protect me and mine at all costs. Hoarding toilet paper



A chalk tribute on the front walk created by members of the Sunday School.

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*Continued from Page 1*

and an increase in gun sales both seem to be symptoms of that mindset. During this pandemic, it's easy to focus only on the things we have lost – some will lose loved ones and jobs, others will lose the ability to gather for church, graduation, or funerals, and the freedom to go freely to the park or the movies.

There are ever increasing loud and angry protests to open the country back up in tandem with laments that “stay-at-home orders” violate one's civil liberties.

Yet amid all this noise are truly compassionate and loving acts happening all around us. These are the times where joy can be found, and hope restored – the times where we experience a “God moment.”

Strangers shopping for elderly neighbors, parents and kids eating dinner together, signs and sidewalk chalk drawings celebrating hospital workers, a 45-car parade for a boy who's been cancer-free for 10 years, nursing home aides enabling Facetime chats between patients and families, virtual choirs and bands, virtual or drive-in worship, drive-thru food pantries, and restaurants feeding essential workers at their own cost, just to name a few.

As followers of Jesus we have a very clear mandate to put others first, to love one another as God first loved us. Christianity is rooted in that belief, and it is in times like these that our faith and witness can offer the hope so desperately needed right now. We draw on our faith to know that God is guiding our every step. Are our roots deep and strong enough to weather the lingering storm of this pandemic? Are we rooted enough to move forward in a way that builds up the kingdom of God?

I know that as the weeks go by, we're all getting a bit stir crazy, wanting to return to life as it was before. But for me, to stay at home and to wear a mask when I do need to go out is a sign of love. It is a way of showing all those around me that I care about them. I have your best interest at heart. I don't want to be responsible for spreading the virus because of my own hubris. I'm willing to sacrifice a little so that you are protected. In Christian love, I'm willing to make an even greater sacrifice to lessen the loss of life, and flatten the spread of COVID-19 so that our healthcare workers and system can catch a break for the first time in weeks. But what comes in the light of that love is the realization that my “sacrifice” pales in comparison to those being made by our incredible essential workers.

It's that knowledge of God's unconditional love and grace that will get us through this. An unrelenting and active love that will be put to use to deal with the hardships revealed and the long-standing issues highlighted by this pandemic. My heart and mind linger over questions like:

How will we help healthcare workers, children, and those with mental illness recover from the trauma of the pandemic?

How will we address the disproportionate loss of life in poor communities because of limited healthcare?

How will we change the way minimum-wage employees – many essential workers – are treated and paid?

How do we end the food insecurity that exists for more than one out of every five of our neighbors?

These are indeed profound questions for us to consider in our church and community. Pondering and praying – and then acting – to alleviate the suffering and injustice around us is fundamental to our call to be the hands and feet of Christ.

This time of isolation has given many the time to reassess what's really important in their lives and to set new priorities. The church has altered how we worship and how we hold meetings; most likely we'll hold onto some of those changes when in-person worship returns. But what other parts of our ministry need to pivot as we venture into a post-coronavirus world? How do we move from just offering charity to fighting for social justice?

In an April 19 blog, entitled, “No, This Pandemic Isn't God's Plan,” pastor-activist John Pavlovitz wrote, “The best guess I have right now, is that this season of suffering (like all moments), is the sacred space for we who claim faith to live what we believe: to persevere and to give and to heal – and above all, to love.

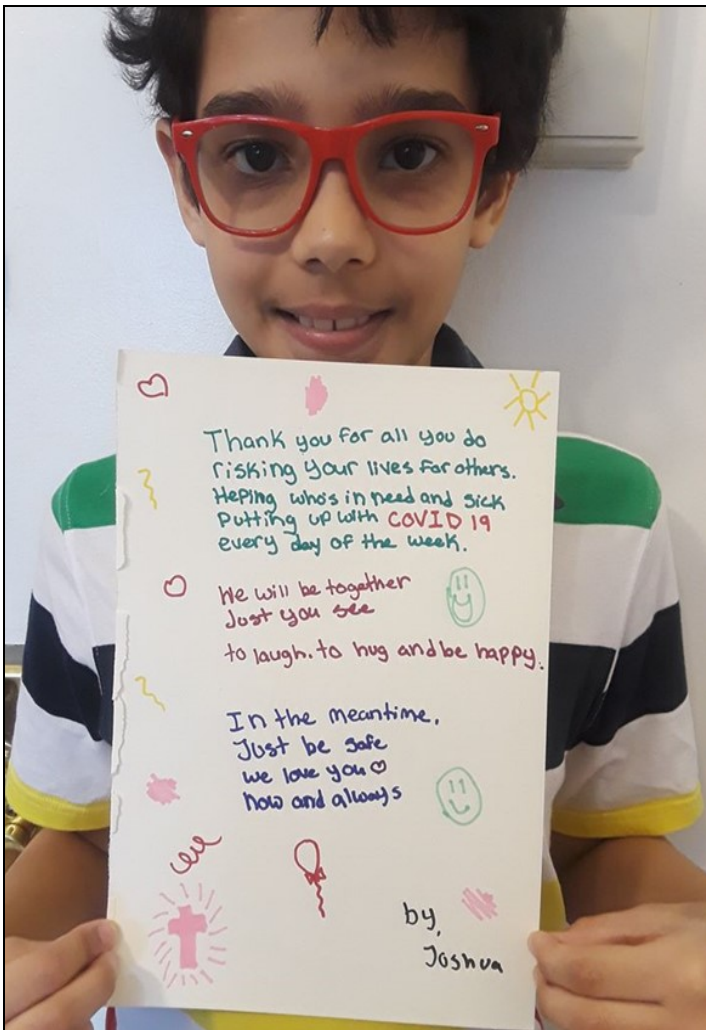
As we make this journey together, may your roots stretch even more deeply and take hold in the fertile soil of God's abundant love and grace. And may the peace that only God can offer find a home in your hearts.

In God's care and service,  
*Pastor Joanne*

## ***Thanking the Moms in Our Lives***

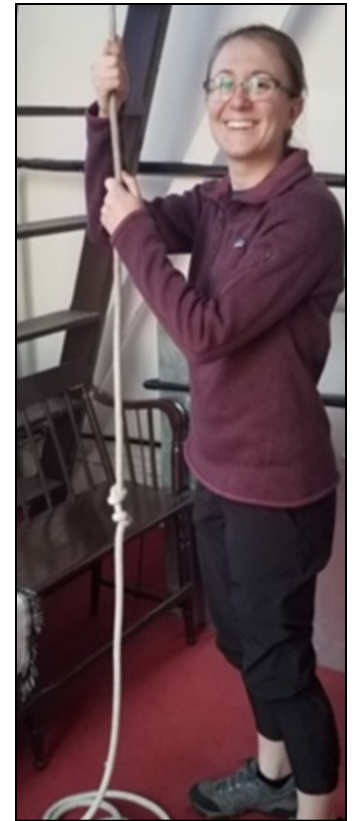
If you're looking for a special way to honor those who have been mothers to you, please consider making a donation to the church in their name. Just make a check out to the church and include a note naming who the donation is in memory of or in honor of. Thanks for your generosity!

## Support Rings Out for those on the Front Lines



Joshua, one of our Sunday School students, shares the poem he wrote thanking those on the front lines dealing with COVID-19. Thanks, Josh!

Pastor Joanne and Lisa Porter left thank-you notes on all the cars in the employee parking areas at the Northern Westchester Hospital in the first weeks of the shutdown.



If you're within earshot of the church at 7 any evening you'll most likely hear the tower bell ringing out in gratitude to all the essential personnel for their long hours and dedication to keep us safe and healthy. Leanne Summers suggested the church join in this nationwide salute. Two of our parishioners - Ross and Coryn Porter - stepped up to the plate (bell) and take turns ringing it each night.



# Holy Week and Easter



Though we were apart physically, we celebrated the wonderful news of Easter morning. Counterclockwise from above: tealights on the altar represent each member of the congregation; flowers were brought to adorn the cross outside; butterflies made by Joshua and Matthew represent new life through the resurrection of Jesus.



Luminaries light the path to the cross draped in purple on Good Friday.

# Making Plans for Re-Opening the Church

Per the latest directive from Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton, churches across the New York Conference will remain closed through at least Sunday, May 24. He urged our congregations to “stay the course and continue to remain focused . . . The containment strategies put in place are for our protection. We must also remember that, for the most part, our local church constituencies are populated by the people most vulnerable to this infection.”

Pastor Joanne and leaders of the church met on April 29 to begin to create a plan for the re-opening of the church – whenever that becomes possible. Deep cleaning of certain areas in the church building will begin this week, and specific protocols will be established for worship, Sunday School and group meetings.

We do plan to continue our “virtual worship” in some way as a means of reaching those unable to attend in person. Please feel free to offer any suggestions or feedback that you may have on moving forward.

The church was able to successfully apply for a Payroll Protection Program loan through the Small Business Administration thanks to the folks at Tompkins Mahopac Bank.

The Mount Kisco Interfaith Food Pantry suspended in-person distribution at the church on April 7; they gave out food to 600 separate households on that day. Since then they have been making deliveries to more than 85 households with homebound members. They are working on plans to re-open sometime in June.

## May Birthday

9: Miranda Kent



## UPCOMING EVENT

**Saturday, June 20:** The Spring Flea Market has been rescheduled for 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on this date, providing that such gatherings will be permitted by then. Interested vendors should contact the church office at 914-666-5014.

## *A Pandemic Prayer*

Risen Lord, hear our cry for help –  
for those surrounded by the shroud of death  
for those covered by the mantle of dying  
for those hemmed-in by illness, visible or veiled,

hear our cry for help...  
for those weighed down with worries  
for those carrying the burden of distress  
for those overwhelmed by isolation  
hear our cry for help...for those who are weary  
for those who are tattered and worn  
for those who collapse from exhaustion  
hear our cry for help...

Risen Lord, hear our cry of thanksgiving –  
for the graciousness with which you hear  
for the patience with which you listen  
for the grace with which you care

hear our cry of thanksgiving...  
for the ways you accompany us through deep valleys  
for the ways you lead us to still meadows  
for the ways you provide all we need

hear our cry of thanksgiving...  
for transforming death in resurrection life  
for blessing and breaking ordinary bread  
for opening our eyes to recognize you  
hear our cry of thanksgiving...

Risen Lord, hear our cry for communities of faith –  
that we retain memory of being together  
that we embrace unity in the reality of distance  
that we foresee a future side-by-side, hand-in-hand  
hear our cry for communities of faith...  
that we sense purpose beyond ourselves  
that we perceive the needs of creation  
that we stretch ourselves to respond

hear our cry for communities of faith...  
that our ways be formed by Your Way  
that our lives be shaped by Your Life  
that our love be Your Love  
hear our cry for communities of faith...  
Amen.



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**We pray. We love.  
We serve.**

## We Are So Grateful

We give thanks for the lives of our congregation members who are essential workers. We can never truly express the deep gratitude for the work they are doing to keep us healthy and strong - be they healthcare personnel, first responders, or grocery store workers. We pray that God will guide and guard their every step.

Jennifer Ruff  
Samantha Ruff  
Heather Kent  
Jeff Kent  
Betty Cherico  
Nancy Beck  
Bessie Maisonet  
Jane Alcala  
Doug Palmesi  
Richard Fitzgerald  
Timmy Gilligan  
Jerry Jones  
Food Pantry workers



We also offer special prayers for those members who are homebound or in nursing homes: Ruth Ali and Mary Ann Johanssen

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