

Pastoral Letter
August 18, 2020

Hi friends,

A recent text thread between myself, Susan, and Monica went something like this:

Sunday night

Rakel: I've got a strange work week with school starting, haircuts, dr appts, and Ben out of town Thursday and Friday. Any chance we could grab an hour tomorrow for a staff meeting? Say 11am?

Monica: I can do that

Susan: Works for me. Would it be helpful to be in the office?

Rakel: Maybe? Not necessarily? I think I'll be at home.

Monday morning

Rakel: Just an update, I will come up to church, there from about 9:45 to noon.

Susan: Plan B for me (because what's a day without changes!) I'm not coming to the office today....I am however working from home.

Rakel: LOL, what's a day without changes. I'll send a zoom link.

Monica: Ain't that the truth.

I am sure you have very similar text threads and conversations. Plans change *constantly* at the last minute right now. And for good reasons; not because we don't care about our work or are poor planners. It's been a long time since I've felt some consistency in work or my personal life. So much of my day is simply reactive. There are so many more decisions to be made for things that were once was simple or routine. Maybe you have experienced the same.

At New Life, we recognize the pressures on all of us and our families. As we look to the fall, I want to describe what we will focus on as a faith community. We want to do what we can to be a spiritual support to all New Lifers, even if it has to look different.

Human connection in our life is a fundamental need. We will seek to provide safe and distanced ways for you to see each other in person. We will continue the Midweek Prayer Service outside as long as we can. In addition, we plan to offer some new ways/times for folks to meet up in the parking lot for coffee & chatting. We have learned we can still connect even while distanced and masked.

Connection to our faith and our God is also an overwhelming need right now. People are leaning into their faith in big ways. Praying through our sadness over all that's been lost. Praying that the surrounding chaos leaves us changed for the better. Praying for the daily bread of courage to face the onslaught of starts and re-starts and re-dos. We want to be a part of making that faith connection.

We want to help everyone pray together, find inspiration in the Bible together. Beginning in the fall, we will offer each week, a short video that guides any person, any family, through the Faith

5. (Share, Read, Talk, Pray, Bless.) It is not easy to call the family together and suddenly announce “hey, let’s open the Bible and talk about it.” This guiding video, new each week, will be the prompt to get this started. There is no better time to start praying together as right now. We’ll help you do this.

In addition, our building projects are wrapping up (praise God)! As final details are finished and furniture is moved back, we look forward to opening up the sanctuary for dedicated individual prayer time. While it won’t feel the same as a Sunday service, we know you long to see the butterfly and soak in the goodness of our lovely, renovated sanctuary. We know this helps you connect with God and we look forward to opening the doors so folks can schedule an intentional time in the sanctuary for prayer and reflection.

I also want to specifically address our families with school-age children. The pressures on families right now are significant. Schools are still figuring out their exact plans and schedules are still changing. And even when plans solidify, we know the virus will demand future flexibility out of us, too. We understand one way we can be helpful is to intentionally not add any demands to family schedules. This means we will not hold any regular virtual classes for SPARK or H2H or 9th grade Confirmation. Those would likely have to be zoom-y and we do not wish to add yet another class-like zoom to zoom-weary families.

However, our youth have the same need for connection and to see each other in person. Kids are missing each other so terribly. We believe we can help with that. So, we will use the Kids’ Connection on Wednesday night after the Mid Week prayer services as our primary way to offer in-person, safe, and physically distant connections for youth. It is short and sweet but it is something. We hope this evolves and we will keep it outside as long as its mild, and then encourage everyone to get good boots and warm hats!

Most of all, I just want you to know your church continues to be here for you. Our worship and programming are taking new forms but it all still exists to support you and your families’ spiritual life. Thank you for your support of your church. We are in this together!

This is temporary.

Keep praying.

Stay connected.

You are loved and missed.

With love,
Pastor Rakel