

A Meditation for the Times:

Dear Fellow Saints of the Shenandoah District,

I confess to being breathless this morning. The rapidity of change over the past week has been staggering. Decisions made on one day soon become outmoded, if not irrelevant, on the next. We stand claiming God's guidance and mercy in ways we had not imagined two weeks ago.

How shall we live and move together during this time? Each day I will be releasing, via email and our Shenandoah District website, thoughts of hope and encouragement. This email will include prayers, ideas and thoughts from around the District.

The question I am pondering today is this. How do we keep responding to needs and concerns when physical spacing is of increasing importance? Galatians 6:9 says it like this, "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers."

How do we keep on doing good? That question is much on the minds of pastors, deacons, and caretakers I have spoken with the past several days. When it is not possible to visit the most vulnerable among us, how do we fulfill the call of the Gospel?

I believe a primary way is a proper understanding of the relationship of fear and love. Our call is to operate in such a manner that demonstrates our ultimate faith and trust in God. That is paramount above all else. As Paul says in 1st Timothy 1:7, "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity (fear), but a spirit of power, of love and self-discipline."

The antithesis to the spirit of fear is, among others, the spirit of love. As an illustration, "For the glory of God and our neighbors good" is a familiar refrain in the Church of the Brethren. How do we love our neighbor and put our neighbors good front and center?

One way of viewing the various restrictions, recommendations, and mandates that are part of daily living is to see those through the eyes of love. These are not unnecessary, burdensome regulations that threaten our everyday practices but rather concrete expressions of love and self-discipline. We follow these "best practices" not because we are afraid for our own welfare and safety, but because it is an act of love not to expose those who are most vulnerable to potential illness needlessly. We base our decisions "for our neighbors good."

I believe deeply that we will find ways of tending to the needs of each other and our neighborhoods that we cannot yet see. God's Spirit will be and is at work,

stirring our imaginations that will open vistas not yet visible (You will find ideas gleaned from a variety of sources in a separate attachment).

This is my prayer for us today:

Lord, by the indwelling of your Spirit, grant us the spirit of power, love and self-control.

Help us to truly act in the spirit of our neighbors' good.

Give us eyes to see the possible during restrictions.

Help us see ways of worshiping that go beyond our sanctuaries.

Help us to care for each other that transcends the limits of physical space.

Help us to pray in ways that call for the love and power of God to be present among us.

Help us to act in compassion, mercy and generosity.

May God Be Glorified,

Amen

John Jantzi

Shenandoah District Executive Minister