

## **Life at Cokesbury**

September 17, 2020

### **A Note from the Pastor**

I have to confess to a fit of impatience this week. At church I've just noticed my focus not being exactly right. Perhaps my external "chatter" filter isn't working exactly right because I'm getting a little tired of masks and social distance and the isolation from not being able to have events where people show up. I know that these things are worth the sacrifice—doing my part personally and as the Cokesbury pastor to keep our little corner of the universe from contributing to the Covid chaos—but it requires a little bit of extra effort right now.

This week I had a conversation with one of our most dedicated volunteers, someone who also has a good deal of stress these days at work. After hearing the exhaustion, frustration, and pure heart, I simply said that I know it's hard right now but that the things that are truly worthy require hard times, struggle, and even a renewed focus. Then, probably in reminding myself, I said that those times of exhaustion can be times of tremendous spiritual growth. Even as I said the words, I sort of wanted to curl up and sleep, myself. Then it hit me that one of the hardest things to do is surrender to the flow of events and take things as they come, especially when I'm tired. That's when it's hardest to surrender, yet that's the place where Jesus meets us most fully.

I've tried tightly controlling things—but I really can't. I've tried working harder as if I'm going to earn my salvation—that's not how it works. I've tried working harder so I can stay distracted—the realities are still there. I've tried sleeping and hoping I'd wake to someone else having done my work—God answered the prayer with the ability to wake up to another day and either get moving or call for more help.

This Sunday I'll be talking about the story of Jonah. He's the epitome of someone whose frustrations get ahead of him, even when God's work is accomplished—yet God still searches him out and finds him at the point of greatest frustration. It could be that we sit under that unpredictable plant ourselves, where neither the shade nor sunlight satisfy us. I think that's part of the spiritual journey that I was silly enough to imagine might not be so.

All of this is to say that growing our faith isn't supposed to be easy because it's truly worth something. We have to offer something, if not all, of ourselves to the process if we want to grow spiritually. We are in the midst of a completely unexpected circumstance that is trying our faith and patience—but for those who strive to follow Jesus in our generation, that means doubling down on the virtues of patience, forbearance, love, gratitude, kindness, and, yes, prayer and sabbath. May you be given the strength to endure and to thrive, even when the circumstances make you bone tired.

Grace,  
Jonathan

### **Music at Cokesbury**

It seems like our fun time of music and fellowship has had the most challenging dependability this year. Whether challenged by potential snow or ice storms early in 2020 or the challenges brought on by Covid-19, we've had a hard time finding ways for consistency. This week we had to cancel because the tent would have included a river flowing right under everyone's feet.

We owe Michael Benton our gratitude for his steadfast commitment to bringing music to us and for his patience and graciousness this year especially. He's set-up and canceled events this year just about every single month.

This will come back together, but for the time being, we continue to practice adaptability more than consistency.

### **Volunteers Needed**

We have been really blessed by members with the eagerness to serve the community by packing and distributing produce on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Those small crews of volunteers have been steadfast and committed. We still need just a few more people to volunteer to help out so that we can give people a break some weeks. It's not hard work and social interaction is limited to 4-7 people at any given time. The work itself isn't super taxing. It's a great way to see our neighbors from the Idlewild community. The time together is wonderful because our congregation are wonderful people. If you are hearing a call from the Holy Spirit to volunteer, email Joan Gillis at [jgillis@cokeburyumc.net](mailto:jgillis@cokeburyumc.net) or call the church office.

### **Sunday Worship Opportunities**

Remember that we are having live, in-person worship every Sunday morning at 9a.m. in the tent (bring your own chair, wear your mask, stay socially distanced, etc). In the month we've held worship this way, we've learned to make worship conversational and relaxed. The weather has also cooperated by giving us nice, cool breezes to make it feel really good to be together.

We also continue to hold our livestream worship services on Facebook Live on Sundays at 10:45a.m. This service includes many of our traditional worship elements but put together specifically for live-streaming broadcast

### **Please Keep These People in Your Prayers**

Serét Dinkler

Pam Betts

Dan Dumas

Doug Hargett

Deanna Long

Randy Pitcock & his sister, Cindy