Today (Wed, March 25) at noon, I joined with sisters and brothers throughout the world praying "The Lord's Prayer". Pope Francis, Archbishop Justin Welby (spiritual leader of the Anglican Communion) and Presiding Bishop Michael Curry of the Episcopal Church, invited humanity to join them in prayer. It is amazing to hear the prayer and the voices from all over the world joining in common fellowship and love. It is amazing that in this time of physical distancing, we can gather spiritually and pray with others virtually in the private space of our homes. Even now, our lives are connected to each other. In this time of unsettled waters, we still can gather and pray and remind ourselves of the connectedness we have with each other and with our Creator God.

For those of us living in Michigan, we are under mandatory sheltering at home. We don't know honestly how long this sheltering at home will last. We know that the Coronavirus has infected many and yes, there has been death. Our lives are disrupted, and we wait, and we pray, and we take a pause in our lives. Our faith, for many of us, carries us through each day. Life is not as it was. That is for sure. I have a scripture that gets me through hard times such as these. It is from Romans 8:38-39: "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God."

Our steadfastness in the one who Created and loves humanity stands with us during these turbulent times. We are all connected...con't page 2
and life continues in and with God.

I write this article today in which the Church celebrates the Day of the Annunciation. Nine months from now we will celebrate Christmas with the birth of the one we call Jesus. I can tell you that for Mary and Joseph this was not an easy time to be pregnant nor to give birth. In fact, it was a terrible time of uncertainty and political unrest. Life was bleak for the people as most lived in poverty. Nothing was certain and living was not easy. Yet in the midst of this instability God chose to remind humanity that we are not alone. God chose to enter this world of uncertainty with all of its chaos. Because God chose to be with humanity, his love endures even to this day as we live in uncertainty and upheaval.

God chooses out of his love to be with us and stands with us today. We are reminded of this love in the Annunciation, in the birth of the one we call Jesus, his baptism, his life on this earth, his death and Resurrection. God stands with us and walks within the midst of our own crisis here and now in the year 2020. God is the calm amidst the rough waves. God is with us and in us and gives us strength even in the midst of the Coronavirus crisis.

A colleague of mine, Lydia Kelsey Bucklin wrote a poem. It touched me deeply and I'd like to share that with you as I bring this article to a close. Read it in the highlighted area, next column.

So, think about this: God is with us and perhaps this is our time to connect with God, with the Divine, in the deepest sense however that might be. Perhaps we have been made for this, made to take a pause in life and find the source of our comfort and love. For in the turbulence and the unsettled waters of what is happening, I believe God continues birthing new beginnings of the Spirit in each of us. God is inviting us to connect in a deeper place with the Divine. Let us all redirect ourselves in the midst of this crisis, remembering always that God is with us. God is in us as we walk this journey together, as we care for each other and for this earth with compassion and love.

Let us pray:

“Loving God, you have led us to this place, not to shield us from heartache and the pain of human life, but to heal us and inspire us, to gently redirect us, till we see the world as you do and love it with your love.” Amen.

Just be.
Be still.
Connect with the inner light.
The inner self.
The deepest knowing of divinity.
It’s in there.
It’s in all of us.
Find it.
However long it takes, just find it.
And cling to it.
Find the song that brings you there.
Or the photo from your childhood.
The piece of art,
or the smell of certain food.
The voice of a loved one.
Even if she’s just a memory.
Only you know what that is,
what you need to connect yourself
to that deep place of knowing.
Of being held in the storm.
What if you were made for a time such as this?

~ Lydia Kelsey Bucklin

Not all storms
come to disrupt your life,
some come to clear your path.
As we approach Palm Sunday, Holy Week and the celebration of Easter, we look upon the world with a much different perspective. Palm Sunday is, of course, the start of Holy Week, generally a whirlwind of activity and special services that go through the final week of Jesus’ earthly ministry. It is a week where we hear Jesus’ command to us at the Last Supper, to do as I do in remembrance of me. And as the week progresses, we experience first-hand His betrayal and horrible death on the cross and then reunite to celebrate joyously at His rising on Easter Sunday.

Well, this year is going to be a bit different. The church gatherings will be replaced with online services and the wonderful family gatherings we love so much, well they’re going to have to wait. Still, the week is not and does not have to be any less significant. Palm Sunday is an important day. It is a day of celebration and of joy and of hope and of a promise realized; something we could all use a little more of right now.

As you probably know, when Jesus entered the City of Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday, he had been ministering to the people for about 3 years. So, Palm Sunday is really a celebration of that ministry. It is a celebration of this man who denied himself in order to serve others. It is a celebration of the one who overcame every temptation offered up by the devil so that he might fulfill his destiny and in so doing, save the world. Jesus gave hope to the poor and the outcasts, he showed compassion and healing to the sick and he gave understanding to us all, showing us that life was so much more than hard labor and violence and hardship and death.

In those three short years, Jesus had challenged everything we once believed in and understood and saw as truth. He challenged his own religious leadership to stop being self-serving and do their job to teach the law to the people and to strengthening their true faith.

Through his many parables, Jesus awakened in us a new sense of right and wrong. He challenged us all to think differently, to act differently and to look at the world in a different way. Jesus called upon us to not only live according to the laws of Moses, but to look beyond the letter of the law to the spirit of the law and do what was right and moral and just.

In those three short years, Jesus demonstrated that violence can be combatted, not with force but with pacifism; that justice was possible when one was willing to look past the surface of a person and see that person for who they are, not for what they are.

And through his life and ministry we learned that God was not some far-off being sitting on a royal throne, barking commands like thunder and throwing lightning bolts and demanding strict obedience and penitence. Through the compassion shown by Jesus, we have come to realize that God was not some far-off being at all, but was here all along, among us, talking with us, sharing with us and embracing us through all the phases of our lives. And that we, his creation; his spoiled, resentful, selfish and totally unworthy creation, need do nothing more to receive that love than to open our hearts and let God in.

But as Jesus entered the Holy City in triumph that day, as we have come to know, events did not transpire as first thought and hoped. The mood of exuberance and joy and jubilation would quickly turn to distrust and misunderstanding and disappointment.

This was not going to be the warrior king the people were expecting. This was not the new David and there would be no army to overthrow their oppressors. And as that realization set in, the feeling of the people quickly changed from joy to anger and finally to blood-lust.

So, this man, who at the start of the week was surrounded by admirers and followers and would-be disciples, would now find himself completely...
alone, completely abandoned, vulnerable and defenseless. It is quite remarkable really. All the people who had pledged their lives to this man, had now suddenly disappeared, nowhere to be found; and when they were finally found, they vehemently denied knowing Jesus at all.

But despite this utter betrayal by all of his friends, all of his followers, all of his disciples, all those who had pledged their lives to Jesus; Jesus stood his ground, holding firmly to his principles and his beliefs and his faith. Jesus would not, could not deny that for which he came into the world. God was his Father from the very beginning and would be his Father in his last days. Thy will be done.

He would suffer so that we need not suffer; and he would sacrifice his life so we, the ones who denied him, might live and live well and fully.

And for all of us who denied him; and make no mistake, we have all denied him, if not with our words then by our actions; Jesus promised us that he would never deny us. We may have abandoned him, but he will never abandon us. No matter what the problem, no matter what the difficulty, no matter what the danger we might have to face or are now facing, we face it confidently knowing that God is at our side and Jesus is holding our hand.

And for those who are continually filled with anger and hatred and distrust, who compromise their principals for personal gain, who steal and murder without care or remorse; Jesus asked God for forgiveness; telling God they know not what they do.

This is the essence of Jesus' ministry and the message of Palm Sunday and of Easter, as it is the message of each and every Sunday.

This man, born in poverty to a simple carpenter and young, naive girl was indeed the Son of God, where upon the mere mention of his name, every knee should bend and every head bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

All that we face, we face together. Our lives are in God's hands as they have always been. He holds us and caresses us and tells us everything will be alright if we just have a little bit of faith. Easter will follow Good Friday as it always has. The dark storm clouds will pass by and the sun will reveal itself again. The sun...The Son, will reveal himself and the glory of God will shine once again.

Have a safe and blessed Easter. Amen.
Connecting With Each Other While Observing Physical Distancing

As we find ourselves in this unprecedented time, we, as a Diocese, are doing an amazing job of reaching out, checking in with each other, providing resources and sharing information even as that information is constantly changing.

We have been using any form of communication at our disposal - whatever works best for meeting the needs of our members be that good old fashioned letters and cards to text, email, Facebook, Facebook Live, Skype, and YouTube. We’re learning to use various forms of technology on the fly and finding that it’s not as intimidating as we may have thought and yes, it’s not been without a few glitches, but it’s worth it to see a smiling face.

Here are some of the offerings that you can tune in to:

**Sunday mornings at 11:15**, the National Cathedral in Washington, DC is offering live services. Go to [www.nationalcathedral.org](http://www.nationalcathedral.org) and do some exploring of their website.

**Mondays at noon** join Fr. Shane Spellmeyer of Trinity Church, Houghton as he offers "Coffee in the Priest's Kitchen" via Zoom. Just a simple time to have a virtual conversation and coffee with others. This is by invitation - he'll send you the Zoom link if you're interested. Contact him at shane.spelly@gmail.com

**Sundays and Wednesdays at noon and 7:00 pm**, Bishop Ray has been hosting Lenten Meditations via Zoom. The number to connect has been sent via email through UPChat. If you aren't getting these email, email Jane at jane@upepiscopal.org and she will add you to the list.

**Charlie West** from St. Paul’s, Marquette has been sending out a one page newsletter every morning with readings, prayers and thoughts. If you would like to be a part of that list send an email to stpaulschurch201@gmail.com.

**Jim Martindale and Jack Lenten** of St. John's, Negaunee sent out a packet to each with a letter and all of the readings for the month of April.

**Bishop Ray** has been making personal phone calls to all of the Senior Wardens across the diocese. He's speaking with them or leaving a message for a call back, making sure we all know that we are in this together and that we all feel connected.

**UP Wildchurch** has been offering Facebook Live prayer/nature/meditation services on Friday evenings at 6:30 pm. You can attend the service virtually by clicking on this link: [UP Wildchurch](https://www.facebook.com/UpWildchurch/)

**Bishop Ray, Lydia Kelsey Bucklin and Jane Cisluycis** have been really busy over the past week or so, coming up with a booklet with simple prayer services that begins with Palm Sunday, includes Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday and celebrates Easter. Those booklets are being sent out to every household across the diocese and should be arriving by the end of this week.

Lydia Kelsey Bucklin is also working with Charles Murphy who was part of the Island Retreat, and the Revival: UP North last fall. He is a gifted musician and liturgist. They are putting together music for Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter. This music will be offered through Facebook, the diocesan's new YouTube channel (type: Episcopal Diocese of Northern Michigan YouTube in your search bar) and also on the diocesan website. More information on this programming will be sent out as soon as it is all available.
Some Positive Things Happening in the Environment as a Result of COVID-19

Submitted by Jacklyn Lenten

During this COVID-19 outbreak, when humans are sheltered inside trying to ride out the storm, the natural world is rejoicing. Before the coronavirus outbreak, we lived in a fast-paced consumer society where we shopped just because we could and made all kinds of unnecessary purchases and burned through gas driving around in the process.

Now, besides essential services, our industrialized world has essentially shut down which has drastically reduced our fossil fuel consumption and our waste emissions. We've been forced to cut back on our excessive consumption and focus on just our personal needs. Take this time to assess your consumption habits, do you shop in your free time just because you can and do you make unnecessary purchases that just get donated or thrown away a couple of months later? Do you eat out more than you really need to? Do you drive around just to kill time or to hop from store to store and could you reduce the amount of driving you do? If the answer to any of these questions is yes, then try to cut some of these bad habits when our lives return to normal.

You'll save some money while you help save the planet. If we cut back on unnecessary purchases, we reduce immediate packaging waste and long-term waste when these items eventually reach the landfill and we reduce the fossil fuel emissions associated with creating and shipping these products.

I know it can be hard to grasp how our purchasing habits in the rural Upper Peninsula contribute to global climate issues, but we're already seeing ecosystems recover while the human world is shut down. China is the world's largest exporter of goods, which has also turned the country into the world's largest polluter and ruined their air quality. In the two months that most manufacturing has been paused due to COVID-19, air pollution has drastically decreased over parts of China. It's estimated that more people in China are killed each year by air pollution than people killed in total due to COVID-19 and that the reduction in air pollution in just two months has already saved over 75,000 lives in China. Although Italy is not nearly the manufacturing nation China is, they are very well known for their high number of private vehicles, busy roads, and frequent traffic jams. With the country on lock-down, no one is going anywhere and we've seen significant drops in air pollutants such as nitrogen dioxide associated with vehicle emissions.

Locally, blue-spotted salamanders have started their migration period and for the first time ever, they are able to cross roadways with no cars disturbing them. Last year over four hundred salamanders were killed by Peter White Drive on Presque Isle in Marquette, which is estimated to be ten to twenty percent of the entire local population. This year, Peter White Drive is closed to the public in the evenings (and since this article was printed, it's been closed completely) to discourage large groups from gathering at the popular beaches. This doesn't make people very happy, but the salamanders are loving it. For the first time since we've started analyzing the salamander migration on Presque Isle, we will be able to see how the ecosystem and other species on Presque Isle Park are effected by the presence of the entire salamander population. This is an incredible victory for local conservationists and of course, for the blue-spotted salamanders.

COVID-19 has had devastating effects on our society and our economy, but the fact of the matter is that we are in the midst of a global pandemic and we have no choice but to wait this out. The very least we can do is look at the positive outcomes of the COVID-19 outbreak and take this opportunity to reset and create a better future for our planet. Take advantage of your time at home to research green initiatives, green companies, and politicians pushing for a greener planet and emerge from this period of physical distancing as an upbeat...con't page 7
The True Cost (2015): Shows the unpleasant truths of the fashion industry including the abuse of human and environmental rights.

Cowspiracy (2014): Dives into the environmental impacts associated with mass animal agriculture.

More Than Honey (2012): Explains why bee populations are dropping globally and the devastating impacts that would result if bees were to go extinct.


Minimalism (2016): Explores the lives of minimalists to explain to viewers how their lives might be better if they started living with fewer physical possessions.

The 11th Hour (2007): This documentary outlines the events and lifestyle changes that have resulted in the current environmental crisis. This documentary is over ten years old and the topics are more relevant now more than ever.

The Biggest Little Farm (2018): Follow the story of a couple trying their hand at sustainable farming.

Inside the Garbage of the World (2016): Debunks the floating plastic island myth, but brings to light much worse truths about the state of our world and the massive amounts of pollution accumulating in our oceans.

Living the Change (2018): A compilation of inspiring stories of people trying to live more sustainable lifestyles.

The Rise of Sustainability (2017): A more optimistic sustainability related documentary than most, this story highlights how the sustainability movement became so mainstream in such a short amount of time.
United Thank Offering Call for Prayers for 2021 Book of Prayers
submitted by Arlene Gordanier

Every three years, the United Thank Offering assembles a small book of gratitude-related prayers, one of the most popular items we give out at each General Convention/Triennial and afterward for as long as they last. We get these prayers from everywhere throughout the Episcopal Church, and it's time to start working on prayers for the 2021 edition. We are looking for original prayers in the following categories: Gratitude, Guidance, Healing, Love of God and Creation, Sorrow or Fear, Prayers for Morning, Prayers for Midday, Prayers for Night, and Other.

We invite all who are interested to write prayers for the 2021 UTO Prayer Booklet in any language and in any format - collect, litany, free form or prose. Please submit all prayers, including a title for the prayer, your name, and your diocese, by June 1, 2020, using this link: dfms.formstack.com/forms. (Please contact Heather Melton at hmelton@episcopalchurch.org if you have any problems submitting the prayers to this website.) We look forward to reading and praying all of your prayers. *Note - Most recently both Marion Luckey and Susan Harries had prayers published in the booklet.

UP Wildchurch to Host Facebook Live Earth Day Service
Lanni Lantto

On Wednesday, April 22nd at 7:00 pm, Faith communities will join together offering wisdom on how to restore our communion with all of Creation. Please consider submitting a prayer at UPwild.org. and plan to watch LIVE online: www.facebook.com/UPwildchurch Earth Day Prayer Service


Just a few of the hundreds of photos posted to Facebook this week as we find new ways to uplift, encourage and bring humor to each other through this most unpredictable time.
April Calendar
As we hunker down in our homes, rather than a list of usual calendar items - most of which are cancelled anyway - here's a list of ideas to get you through a 'Stay Home, Stay Safe Quarantine'

Fri, 3 - UP Wildchurch, Live, 6:30 pm; Consider starting a Gratitude List.
Sat, 4 - Decorate your front door with something green for Palm Sunday

Sun, 5 - Use the Holy Week Booklet sent from the Diocese to observe Palm Sunday
Mon, 6 - Grab a cup of coffee/tea, your favorite morning beverage, find a quiet spot and consider your many blessings - write and send some Easter cards
Tues, 7 - Accept the invite from Fr. Shane of Trinity, Houghton for virtual "Coffee in the Priest's Kitchen from 12 - 1 pm
Wed, 8 - At 7:00 pm light a candle, joining with others around the country to share the light
Thurs, 9 - Use the Holy Week Booklet to observe Maundy Thursday
Fri, 10 - Good Friday, search for online services, use the Holy Week Booklet service
Sat, 11 - Easter Vigil, online services, Holy Week booklet, call a friend/loved one and share it

Sun, 12 - Easter Sunday - Hallelujah! He is Risen! Rejoice!
Mon, 13 - Grab a cup of your favorite morning beverage, find a quiet spot. Reflect on the past few weeks and count your blessings, add to your Gratitude List. We're doing this - together.
Tues, 14 - Shake out your carpets and rag rugs; join Fr Shane at 12 for virtual coffee
Wed, 15 - Clean out the silverware drawer, wash the tray, put it all back together again. Join Bishop Ray at noon and/or 7 pm for meditations, add an entry to your Gratitude List
Thurs, 16 - Send a note/greeting to a neighbor - it's Nat'l "Wear PJs to Work Day", isn't that what those working from home have been doing for a couple of weeks?
Fri, 17 - Has the snow melted enough to be out picking up branches and raking yet??
Sat, 18 - National Haiku Poetry Day – double dog dare you to come up with one and post it!

Sun, 19 - 2 Easter: Acts 2:14a, 22-32; Psalm 16; 1 Peter 1:3-9; Gospel - John 20:19-31
Mon, 20 - Soak/bleach white towels, socks, sheets - unless you have well water, bleach will turn all those whites a pretty shade of pink from the iron. Ask Kathy, she knows...
Tues, 21 - Get outside and enjoy some nature. Nature always makes a person feel better.
Wed, 22 - Earth Day, tune in to UP Wildchurch, partnering with other Faith denominations to celebrate our Earth.
Thurs, 23 - Clean out your kitchen cupboards/cabinets. Just start with one.
Fri, 24 - Make a list of things you want to accomplish this weekend.
Sat, 25 - Wipe down all of the windowsills in the house. Shine all of your mirrors.

Mon, 27 - Make yourself a cup of coffee/tea/orange juice, sit down and review that gratitude list
Tues, 28 - Nat'l Super Hero Day! - write a note to your hero telling them why they're you're real life hero
Wed, 29 - Nat'l Shrimp Scampi Day
Thurs, 30 - Congratulations! We've made it through our first full month quarantined.

Cross Roads
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