

Greetings to you all,

It has been a whirlwind 10 days; for some even longer. I found myself on a couple of occasions feeling overwhelmed, like some of you I imagine, about getting out into what can feel like a frenzy at the stores. I forgot to breathe and breathe deeply.

I found myself also, quite overwhelmed, by the joy of grace, the humor of strangers and the magnificence of gratitude of many, including my own gratitude.

While in the store earlier this week, standing in line behind me was a man wearing a surgical mask. I asked him if he thought he was sick. He said, "No. I am a nurse and am required to wear this." When I asked him how he was feeling, he responded, "Scared." I asked him if he had children. He responded, "Yes, a 12-year-old." I asked him how she or he is feeling and he said, "He is scared for me."

Both of us had water in our eyes. I told him I was a pastor. I asked his name and if I could pray for him and ask my faith community to pray for him. He smiled (I could tell even from under his mask) and he said, "Yes."

So, his name is Ralph and he works at one of our local hospitals. Please pray for him, in your daily prayers, for all those working in our hospitals, for the chaplains, including our own dear sister, Stephanie, for some who cannot go in and be physically present with the dear ones in the hospitals.

Pray for those in elder care communities who miss the regular visits from friends and family and for their care providers who now take up that role along with the role they already have.

Please include in your prayers our unsheltered sisters and brothers some of whom I had the overwhelming joy of serving with Dan, Neil and Joe this past week. The gratitude was palpable and my gratitude to serve caught my breath in my throat.

We are reminded in the midst of this, that we are in the season of Lent – a time when we give up some things that we would be drawn closer to the life of Jesus – both his sacrifices and his giving.

The resurrection is coming soon. You can trust in that. Here and now, we are in the season that prepares us for the dawning of that joy. Let us live in that season – for even here God is with us.

I want to close with this poem from Rev. Jim Burklo, Sr. Assoc. Dean of Religious and Spiritual Life at USC.



# FEAST AND FAST

FOR LENT 2020

REV. JIM BURKLO

Let us fast from hugging and handshaking  
And let us feast on bowing and waving.  
Let us fast from hoarding food and toilet paper  
And let us feast on the food in the back of our pantries.  
Let us fast from gathering physically  
And let us feast on communing virtually.  
Let us fast from obsessing about the future  
And let us feast on the everyday wonders of the present.  
Let us fast from casting blame for our troubles  
And let us feast on creative ways of coping.  
Let us fast from worrying about ourselves  
And let us feast on showing compassion for the most vulnerable.  
Let us fast from being scared  
And let us feast on getting prepared.  
Let us fast from fear  
And let us feast on the perfect Love that casts it out...

*Shalom, Saluam,*

*Rev. Pamela L. Kurtz*

Rev. Pamela L. Kurtz, Pastor