

A letter to the member congregations of the NACCC:

I have been in conversations with my friend, Ray Schulte, Executive Director of the Center for Parish Development, discussing material which we can offer as a resource to the member churches of the NACCC in these days. As you remember, the NACCC and the CPD are in a ministry partnership helping churches in a process of church renewal. This will be the first of such resources I will suggest you can use within your congregation.

One of the most challenging parts of this pandemic is that when we need to “be the church” most we are isolated and cut off from one another. But **just because we can't GO TO CHURCH, does not mean we will stop BEING THE CHURCH.**

I am writing to offer suggestions to help us share with one another in ways that name who we are, what we do, the fears we are experiencing, but also contribute to claiming faith and our hopes.

In these times it is helpful to remember our past as a way to deal with the present and look to the future. Here are questions that invite you to remember together. You know of God's blessings at your church. You know about faithfulness, about challenges met and ministries that were fruitful. Those are the stories that we want to claim. This exercise blesses us as we share with one another.

1. Remember a time at your church when you felt most alive, most connected to God and to one another. What happened; what was your part in it? Describe what you felt. What do you value most about being church together?

2. Reflect on our current experience of this pandemic and share:

What has been taken?

What has not been taken?

What have we been given or what are we being given?

3. Reviewing what you have shared, does it offer any new perspectives for what we face today? How does what you shared have an impact on how you think about the future?

4. How will you share your stories and thoughts with others in your church community?

Within your ministry context, I would urge you to find a way that you can engage the members of your church in thinking about these reflection questions and finding a way that you can share individual's responses with the whole church. Perhaps there could be a calling tree or a Zoom call or an email chain employed. There is benefit in encouraging our people to reflect on these, but there is immeasurably more benefit in having all in the church hear one another's thoughts.

Grace and Peace, Michael