



Rediscovering the importance of community

Connecting in new and old ways.

By Bishop Greg

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Did you ever think a simple phone call would have so much meaning?

In the midst of this COVID-19 crisis, we are hearing story after story of people reaching out and connecting in new and old ways, using Zoom or Skype or the “old-fashioned” phone. Just yesterday the phone rang — a friend from Calgary was just finishing 14 days in self-isolation. He was spending part of each day phoning friends he hadn’t talked to in a while. It was a wonderful gift to receive on a day that was so busy. The call helped me recalibrate my day and helped me cherish friendship and communication.

Perhaps this time of physical distancing is helping us reflect; to think about the things that matter, the things we often take for granted. Are we reclaiming what connection and communication are all about?

I think we also are finding new ways to say thank you. Even though I stand back the required two meters in the grocery store line-up, I can still hear people thanking the grocery teller for being there for us all. It has also been wonderful to observe communities banging pots at 7:00 pm each night! What an intriguing ritual. In our community, all available fire trucks and police cruisers that are not otherwise occupied, drive slowly by the condos and houses along the street leading to the hospital. People step out on their balconies; they cheer and clap and bang pots and pans in appreciation and support of all the emergency and health care workers. They are saying thank you for working hard to keep us safe and for providing care for us, knowing that by virtue of their work they are exposing themselves to a higher risk of infection. People don’t even have to be close to the hospital to participate in this ritual. In many of the neighbourhoods across Greater Vancouver, people step out onto their patios or doorsteps and cheer and bang pots as a communal thanksgiving ritual.

In the mail-slot the other day came a notice from a citizens’ group in the area, asking if we needed any assistance to do errands or to have groceries picked up. Are we, as a society, re-discovering the importance of community? I think we are.

As a society, we tend to worship individualism. We are private people. “My business is my business.” Yet, perhaps, walls are coming down, brick by brick. Are we seeing renewed understanding of the importance of connection, relationship, and of being “neighbour”?

Remember that story Jesus told — the one about someone in need and yet people passed by, not wanting to get involved? But one person does get involved. It is the unexpected one. Jesus then asks the person who posed the original question of “Who is my neighbour?” The answer: “The one who cared for him.” Maybe we are relearning what it means to be neighbour.

There is now some blank space left on this page. This is so you have a few moments extra to pick up the phone and get in touch with someone. Go ahead. Make a phone call. Tell them I sent you.

Peace be with you all.

+Bishop Greg