**Keep reaching out: staying engaged with the world**

During this time of Covid, maybe you are finding time to reach inward in a contemplative way by picking up a habit of spiritual renewal—maybe the Bible, maybe poetry or music, or exploring the spring surprises all around you. And having looked inward, now you can reach out and share with others using whatever means is best for you. It is so true that in giving, we receive. Maybe you have thoughts on getting more people to engage in work of the churches, get out and vote, or actions to reduce pollution for a brighter future for all. Choose your direction, and stay engaged.

 Parker Palmer’s book On the Brink of Everything is a source I found, and want to share this bit that I hope you will find inspiring. He’s a Quaker, a teacher, and a writer. In this passage he is talking about an experience when he was in his 30s (he’s now in his 80s), when he was at a Quaker Friends Meeting.

 “ …I noticed half a dozen elderly women chatting with each other. I smiled and thought to myself, “How sweet to have memories of Grandma rekindled! I can even catch a faint scent of the apple pie that often filled the kitchen of her simple home…’

In the midst of my reverie, one of the women looked my way, broke off from the group, and walked directly to me. Without any preliminaries, she grabbed my arm, as if to keep me from fleeing, and said. “I’ve just returned from a meeting in Des Moines about Native American rights, and I want to tell you what I learned”---which she did, in considerable detail, as she tried to recruit me for her project.

When she left, having achieved her goal, I thought, ‘She’s not Grandma and apple pie! She’s the kind of person I want to be when I’m an old man!’

 Our youth-oriented culture sends a message to elders that can discourage and defeat us. ‘It’s time to withdraw from serious engagement with a world that’s changing so rapidly you can’t possibly keep up. So take up harmless hobbies and hang out at home.’

 There are only three problems with this message 1. It robs older folks of sources of vitality, meaning, and purpose. 2. It robs the world of the gifts elders have to offer, and 3. It’s ridiculous. Other than that, it’s a great idea.

 When I’m with elders whose world has shrunk to the dimensions of their TV room—and who have no health problems to limit their mobility, I’m with the walking dead. But when I’m with elders who have a mind-and-heart connection with the world beyond their walls, I find their vitality contagious, even if they are confined to their homes.

 Instead they reflect the way we can stay engaged with public life by using our voices and speaking our minds. If publishing an essay or book isn’t your thing, you can write letters to the editor, speak up at local forums, or talk with family and friends about things that matter to you and to them.

 ‘Keep reaching out’ means saying to the world, ‘I’m still a member of this community. I have a voice and things I need to say, and I want to be part of the conversation.’ Even more important, it means saying all of that to yourself until it’s engraved on your heart.

Note: Toadstool Bookstore offers free mailing if you order a book. Help support local businesses.

**Upcoming Events**

* **Parade of Mason Graduates** This will take place beginning at the school at 1 pm on **May 30th (**rain date of May 31st) They will be accompanied by our police, fire company, and Mason Highway crew vehicles. The route will be published soon, so we can all get out to cheer them along their future paths. Watch the Town website and school sign for more information.
* **Covid related news** Just in case you have missed something.
1. Wear a mask whenever you are out. Make it a habit whenever you are shopping—it’s not all about you, it’s about protecting the vulnerable elderly, or others with immune deficiency diseases. Take hand sanitizer with you, and wash your hands frequently whenever you pickup items, and before you get back in your car. Wash very well when you get back home!
2. **If you have any symptoms and want to be tested for Covid 19, and are over 60 or have certain conditions,**  you don’t need to go to your doctor: Sign up here: <https://prd.blogs.nh.gov/dos/hsem/?page_id=8479&fbclid=IwAR2GZCf7by-CjAlhZg8huX6tlCSw8oBRJwY3tMZXZ4ohLU7ag0xUMRBi_pw>  Milford Armory is the closest testing location to us.  You don’t need to be tested if you have no symptoms. These aren't antibody tests which test to see if you had the virus.
3. There are COVID rules for getting something notarized:  <https://www.nationalnotary.org/notary-bulletin/blog/2020/03/states-emergency-action-remote-notarization>
4. **Get outside and play**  Be aware that NH Parks have a reservation system now, at least some of them do. If you go to a local area and the parking lot is busy, keep your mask on in the lot, but also realize soon these people will be spread over miles of trails, and you will probably not encounter them very often. Step off the trail by at least 6-10 ft and allow them to go by. Here in Mason, especially during the week, most times there are none or few cars in our local trailheads. There are only a few spaces anyway!!
* **Planet Earth Stewardship** The Mason Energy Commission is planning a Virtual Solar and other alternative energy tour during the summer. Watch for more information. Meanwhile, go to <http://harei.org> for more information on the Hillsborough County Area Renewable Energy Initiative. This is DIY alternative energy done as an old fashioned barn raising, by you and these remarkable professional volunteers.
* **Another way of Stewardship** What about an energy audit for your home? First, it can save you money, and, it will reduce the impact of your carbon footprint. <https://www.energy.gov/articles/home-energy-audits-making-homes-more-energy-efficient-and-comfortable> Covid times may delay when they can come to you.
* **Earth Year 2020 What does the Lord require of you?** What stewardship task can you do? How about use less plastic to keep it from clogging our trash disposal, the oceans—and remember that plastic is made from fossil fuel! Reduce use of plastic bags at the grocery store, by just putting the groceries back into the cart, then bagging them yourself. This is actually kind of nice since you can bag them according to the way you will unpack them. <https://www.greenamerica.org/take-plastics-challenge/11-easy-ways-kick-plastic-habit>

So many people are out walking these days, take a bag and some gloves, and pick up trash, and recycle it!

* **Church Treasurer** Darrell says thank you to all who continue to mail in pledges. He notes that although we are not meeting, the expenses and work of the church continue. Mail to Darrell Scott, Treasurer, Mason Congregational Church, 33 Valley Road, Mason, NH 03048
* **Community Supper –** The A-Team of Community Supper workers are all well and ready to go when it’s possible. Meanwhile, think of writing a check to Greenville Food Pantry, St Vincent DePaul instead of just enjoying a meal, offer a meal! Here is their website: <https://www.foodpantries.org> and the phone number to **get food or give food** is 878-0518. They are open once a week, and by appointment. The address is Sacred Heart Church, Greenville Food Pantry, 15 High Street, Greenville, NH 03048. You can also give money directly to the New Hampshire Food Bank which distributes food all over NH to the many food pantries wherever they are. [www.nhfoodbank.org](http://www.nhfoodbank.org) to donate directly.
* **Nashua Soup Kitchen** Since all our volunteers are over 65, we have put this mission on hold. Understanding that the Soup Kitchen is needed as much and perhaps more than ever **consider a contribution to: Nashua Soup Kitchen and Shelter, Inc PO Box 3226, Nashua, NH 03061-3116 or donate at their website** <https://nsks.org/> Remember that their upcoming fundraisers are probably all cancelled! Help where you can.
* **Living Room Coffee House** Since no gatherings are taking place, listen to great music on your electronic device, or maybe like us, you also have old things like tapes and CDs, or **even** records that you can pull out and rattle the windows with your favorites. Dancing is great exercise!

 **Remember our church family in your prayers. Attached to this email is a list of members and friends at our church. Make a plan to keep in touch by a quick call, or email. Talk about things that will be uplifting, there’s no point in re-hashing the many news bulletins! Some topics might be crafts, closet and file cleanings, yard/plants plans, favorite stories from their past history, ask about anything they might need if they are over 60 and are staying out of any stores. If you suffer from “I don’t know what to say” go to** <https://storycorps.org/participate/great-questions/> **to find a list of some wonderful questions. In fact you may want to interview someone in your house that you think you know! Find out more today. Reach out to neighbors by phone, or even have a chat, outside and 6-10 feet apart!**

* **Our Halbrooks family** are now at 279 Mountain Road, Jaffrey, NH 03452.Beth says her parents have moved in to the “In-law” living space, have suffered their 2 week quarantine, and are now able to interact with the family. Phew! The children are missing out on their horseback riding lessons, meet ups with other homeschoolers, and library visits. Meanwhile you can send a snail mail message telling them we are keeping their pew reserved. Call or email: Jacob c: 321-2397 Beth c: 321-2527 Jhalbroo@gmail.com mehalbrooks@gmail.com
* **Curt Dunn** Karin says Curt is in a lot of discomfort, and is now on palliative care. Calls in the morning may be possible, but later he is not available. If you don’t reach him, leave a message at the main number to let him know you called. Curt is at the rehab center Courville, 44 West Webster Street in Manchester. For Curt, who is Mr. Social this time must seem like imprisonment. Give him a call: 222-3204 or Courville phone is 647-5900
* **Susan and Jim Suokko** I spoke with Susan last week and they will be home in June, but plan to make Florida their permanent home after this summer. They moved to Leominster, MA last fall to an apartment. If you know someone who needs some furniture, they need to empty their apartment quickly this summer. Their new address is: 50 Brooks Pond Rd, Apt 104, Leominster, MA 01453. Their Florida address is Florida: 8814 28th Ave. Palmetto, FL 34221. We miss them, and hope they will visit us this summer. Usercat2@comcast.net for email or call 941-920-0270
* **Laila Washburn March 3rd was Laila’s 101st birthday.** Kristen reports that her grandmother is very sad and really does not understand why no one is coming to see her. Send her a card with a picture of yourself or your family! It may help ease her loneliness. Laila lives at Summer Hill Assisted Living in Peterborough. Laila Washburn, Summer Hill, 183 Old Dublin Rd, Peterborough, NH 03458. Call: 603-924-6238
* **Gretchen and Wally Brown** This is a hard time for them. Wally can still go to work since he is usually socially distant as he works! They still have their caretaker who comes to stay with Gretchen. We can’t stop by but call in the evening when Wally is home, just to check in. Ask if there are any ways to help. Cards to: 421 Meetinghouse Hill Rd, Mason, NH 03048 phone: 878-1481

\*\* \*\* \*\* \*\* \*\* \*\* \*\* \*\* \*\* \*\* \*\* \*\* \*\* \*\* \*\* \*\* \*\* \*\* \*\* \*\* \*\* \*\* \*\* \*\* \*\* \*\* \*\*

 You can leave a message at the church for Reverend Veronica, 878-1684, Revpalvwd50@aol.com or reach her at home, 213-6368 or reach out to a Deacon, listed below.

Share a story, or a creative way you are passing this time in our lives, and we can share these via the Mason Congregation Facebook page, or perhaps the newsletter, all with your permission. Please let a Deacon know if you know someone who needs a prayer shawl, or a new baby who needs a Welcome Baby Hedgehog. See list below.

**Deacons:** Ann Moser 878-3826 amoser@earthlink.net Nancy Richards 878-2190 windywych@aol.com Kathy Chapman 878-4993 Chapman.kathy@gmail.com Michelle Scott 878-1680 miscott39@gmail.com

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

CVTC, the Community Volunteer Transportation Company is still operating, since their services are especially needed at this time. They are a free service, and will take people to medical appointments (routine appointments have mostly been cancelled) but cancer treatments continue for some. They also take people to the grocery store, pharmacy for prescriptions, and to bank and post office. **During this time they are still taking people to appointments and vital services, all done with protective gear and lots of disinfectant/and sanitizers!**



Please spread the word about CVTC. It’s free to riders, and the drivers can be reimbursed for gas! A win-win all around. Sign up to be a driver. It’s so simple to pick up a trip, give the ride, (make a new friend or two), and the CVTC administration is efficient and kind. Really kind!