

To the clergy, lay leaders and members of our New Hampshire Conference churches:

I will be drafting some more extensive thoughts in the next day or so. But for the moment I wanted to remind us all of a few truths.

First, you are essential. No President, Governor, or even Conference Minister gets to define that truth for you. That truth is defined solely by God's call and the rushing winds of the Spirit among you. Your response to who God is calling you to be is absolutely essential.

You have been essential all along. You have joined your voices together in worship. When you were unable to do so in person, you found adaptive ways to do so. You maintained essential connection to the Divine and your fellow congregants during circumstance that have repeatedly shifted. You have shown extraordinary care and connection for those who are isolated, hurting and vulnerable in your communities. You have delved deeper into the study of scriptures and spiritual practices. You have found ways to maintain your missional focus and continue to birth love and justice into our world. Church, I have watched in awe at all you have done these past weeks. We must not allow any narrative, internal or external, to diminish the essential work of God that has been happening.

As church, we have a clear mission. We are to love God with all our hearts, minds, and souls and to live our neighbors as ourselves. These two can not be divorced from one another, nor are they in competition with one another. To love God IS to love your neighbor. To love your neighbor IS to love God. I urge that any and all of our decision making be first and foremost grounded in this core mission put before us by Christ who is head of the Church Universal.

Now is no time to be reckless. The consequences for church and community are too great. Now is no time to be divided. We must work together for the health of the entire body of Christ.

Friends, I know these are not easy days. And I want you to know that I am heartened by the faithfulness you have shown through ever one of them.

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