



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Lessons From the Pandemic

ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton Weekly Video Message

March 12, 2021

We've just come to the one-year anniversary of the pandemic and sheltering in place. For many of us, our lives have been completely upended. We've spent the past year at home, distanced from each other, not going to church or in public settings. It's really been something. But I wonder what would our March 2021 self have to say to our March 2020 self about the pandemic, and I've thought of a few things.

First, it's going to be a marathon and not a sprint, so take a breath and settle in. Yes, we find out that people hoard the darndest things and there will be intermittent shortages of flour, yeast, firm tofu, for some reason, and passion fruit LaCroix. As well as other important staples like toilet paper and Clorox wipes.

We'll find out that there are inequities in this country, still, and in our church, that the pandemic has disproportionately affected and even killed Black and Brown people. And those deemed essential workers often include those who are paid the least.

We'll find out that we're resilient and creative and that we've been able to find ways to keep the mission of the church going and to communicate and stay in contact with each other even if we can't do it with a physical presence.

We found out that our rostered ministers, pastors and deacons, and our lay leaders in our congregations work tremendously hard to make sure that the gospel still has free course in the world.

We've seen a lot about ourselves in the church, some of it very good and some of it really just not lovely. But Jesus said, "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." There are some things about this past year and pandemic that I prefer to forget. But there are many things that we need to remember and to carry with us into life once the pandemic comes under control.

We need to carry on the understanding and the reality that we can't do any of this by ourselves. We need to be aware that we don't want to go back to the way life was before the pandemic if it means the continuation of racial and economic inequities. We need to carry forward with us the new ways that we found to communicate with each other and to reach out. And we need to hold with us, always, the truth and the reality that God has been with us and will be with us through all of this. Be well, dear church.

