

We are a Transforming Church

By Pastor Hope Deutscher

In mid-February, a group from Gran-Park-Rollag and Living Grace began a journey with Rev. Dr. Rick Morse – inviting us to look at our churches and communities with openness for change. In one session, Morse said most churches are driven by the calendar – Wednesday evening programming and Sunday morning worship, fellowship and Sunday School. I never would have imagined that less than two months later those schedules have been turned upside down.

The calendar doesn't drive our church – or our connection with one another. Instead, we are grieving the loss of normalcy and what we knew as the norm, the loss of connection with one another, the loss of shaking hands and giving comforting hugs. Instead, I pray with people over the phone, I turn on my computer and host video/phone Zoom gatherings and Bible studies and a few of us come into an empty building and prepare worship for you.

So now we're in this in-between time – waiting to see what the “new normal” will be when we return to gathering together. When Living Grace leadership decided on March 15 that we would suspend worship for two weeks, I really thought I'd be back to “normal” in two weeks. But we are not returning to what we knew; we now have an opportunity to look ahead and ask ourselves collectively “What is our story?”

During the month of May, our GPR and Living Grace Transformational Team will come together (in some appropriate physical distancing way) to continue the journey with Rick Morse, focusing on the theme *“Imagining a New Future for Your Congregation.”* We are putting together reports of what resources we have: buildings, finances, volunteers, and now we include technology and capacity to adapt quickly to a changing landscape around us. We will continue to ask some valuable questions: What does God want for our churches to become? What are we waiting for? What is the REAL reason we do not change? What three ways can we deepen our connection to God?

Change can be challenging, but it can also provide an opportunity to see new and creative ways God is calling us to be church outside the building. We are a church being transformed in many ways by the events of our world; but more importantly we are being transformed by the Holy Spirit – called to new endeavors we may not imagine, we may be timid in trying but what we have found in the last month is that we are the church in many new and wonderful ways.

May God peace and blessings be with you during this transformative time!

Pr. Hope Deutscher