

# REFLECTIONS ALONG THE WAY

Dear friends,

Three-year-old Lydia doesn't remember much about life before the pandemic. She doesn't remember passing the peace during worship, or crowding together on the chancel steps for the children's sermon. She doesn't remember ever getting a hug or a handshake from anyone outside her immediate family.

She does remember that in the fall, her family's beloved dog Hobbes died. She watched her parents dig a grave to bury him in their rural backyard.

Lydia understands that there's a sickness that's spread all over the world. She knows the sickness means she has to wash her hands and wear a mask. Every night, she prays with her family: "God, please help the world get better."

One recent night at bedtime, after repeating their prayer, Lydia asked, "When the world is better, will we keep wearing masks?"



***Our deepest yearning for a better world is one that only God can bring about . . .***

"No, when the world is better we can take our masks off," her mom replied.

"And when the world is better," Lydia asked again, "will Daddy un-dig Hobbes?"

This spring, our region is making the slow transition into a post-pandemic reality. It might seem that the world has recovered, has gotten better. In some ways, things are just as we left them: Lenten paraments from 2020 still on the altar, and congregations ready to pick up with their regular routines. But we are discovering that not everything is the same. We've adopted new habits that will take a while to break, and found new rhythms that we may no longer want to disrupt. Some of our relationships have not survived a long absence. Some of us are coping with the dimensions of a new chronic illness, "long covid," or wrestling with new trauma and anxiety. And over 25,000 of our neighbors in Pennsylvania have died. There are missing faces in our communities, empty pews in our sanctuaries, fresh graves in our cemeteries. The world is getting better, but not everything can be un-dug.

Lydia's question reminds me that vaccinations and herd immunity, while an excellent and long-awaited step, are not sufficient to make the world better. Our Christian hope is not in scientific advances or political victories or any event that can be wrought by human hands. Our deepest yearning for a better world is one that only God can bring about: the New Jerusalem, the holy city where mourning and crying and pain are no more, where righteousness and peace will kiss.

Easter offers us a glimpse of that glory. When Jesus rose from the tomb, the kingdom of God was set into unstoppable motion. Resurrection is not a one-time event; it is a repeating pattern, evident in the world around us and promised for each of us. In the creed, we declare we believe in the resurrection of the body: we, too, will rise. We believe in the relentless triumph of life and love over death and evil. We believe in a God who un-digs every dead thing.

The post-pandemic world will still include confusion, pain, and grief. But we are united by our longing for a day when resurrection light suffuses all creation. In the name of our resurrected Christ, the first one un-dug from the dead, we pray together for a world made better.

Your sister in Christ,

The Rev. Liddy Barlow  
Executive Minister  
Christian Associates of Southwest PA

