



Pastoral Update—August 21, 2020

*“A new heart I will give you.”* Ezekiel 36:26



Ezekiel brought the Lord’s word of hope to the Israelites in a time of exile and suffering. God said their hearts of stone would be replaced with God’s heart of love. God’s spirit would be put into their hearts so they could display God’s holiness to others. In our time of pandemic suffering and exile, where are our hearts prickly or stony? How will God make our hearts new to renew a steadfast spirit within us? How will people know God’s love and mercy through our actions borne of our faith?

It is difficult when we cannot be together for in-person worship, study, and fellowship. I am not permitted to make visits to hospitals or care centers. I can’t do the counseling and listening I would normally do in person. But there is hope on the horizon.

Although Arizona is still in the Red “Substantial” zone for “# of cases” and “% positivity,” we are presently in the Green “Minimal” zone for hospitalizations. When AZ is out of the Red in all 3 zones, we can begin counting down the weeks until we can begin to meet in small groups. If the downward trends continue, we will eventually be able to gather for in-person worship with physical distancing measures. Pray that numbers continue to decrease, and the spread is controlled, so we can be together again.

Until then, our reopening team is ready to help us put safety measures in place. Along with council, chamber and staff on Zoom, we are leading Fall 2020 planning. We have a new, intergenerational education ‘Playlist’ online platform ready for September, a mission-centered stewardship program is in the works, research is happening for online meetings and updated digital resources, the call committee is working hard, and we are visioning for new mission and ministry opportunities. This is hard work apart, but it is vital to Desert Cross and our call and ability to share our hearts of love.

If your heart is struggling in this pandemic, here are a few resources that might help bring peace:

<https://www.alonetogether.com/> and

<https://www.vibrant.org/safespace/>

Jesus fills our hearts with love and says, *“Peace I leave with you...Let not your heart be troubled, or afraid.”* May our hearts be at peace with the joy and hope of the Lord even in the midst of our trials, so we might choose love every time.

From my heart to yours,

*Pastor Andrea*

P.S. As promised, here is an update from Pastor Doris:

*Beloved Desert Cross community,*

*I think I was hoping my journey of healing would be a straight road forward. Of course, any journey in life has its twists and turns, this journey from cancer patient to cancer survivor is no exception. My understanding at this point is that I will be starting a five - week course of radiation and chemotherapy in the beginning of September. I am so very, very grateful for all of the support and daily encouragement that I have received from members of the Desert Cross community. It has been humbling and empowering; I so appreciate your prayers! I feel like I have been riding a wave of prayers and I hope to continue this holy ride until the treatments are over. I am so very thankful that I am part of the Desert Cross community during these unusual days. You all have made an imprint of love on my heart.*

*Abundant blessings,*

*Pastor Doris*