



Pastoral Update—July 31, 2020

*“Let us run with **perseverance** the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith . . .” Hebrews 12:1-2*



“The Pandemic Puzzle, Part II”

In May, I shared a 1000 piece circus puzzle that Olivia and I finished in two weeks. We just finished a 1000 piece cat puzzle, and it was more challenging! It took one month of perseverance to come together and two pieces were missing! Our picture is complete but not perfect, and we are puzzled about the missing pieces. Still, we enjoyed the process which brought us relaxation and distraction from the difficulties surrounding our lives in this pandemic.

Once again, puzzling reminds me of the pandemic process. There are still many pieces scattered, and we wonder if it will ever come together. In March when this all began, we never imagined that in July, there would still be no end in sight. Many pieces of the puzzle are missing, and we have no answers. We can't even speculate when we will be able to gather in person again.

We've learned that this pandemic is a marathon not a sprint. In times like these, it's easy to become fatigued and even lose hope. But we must persevere now more than ever! It's like a runner in a race who must stay focused and positive. So let us run *this* race marked out for us with perseverance. Fix your eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. Struggles, challenges, and suffering were nothing new to Paul's life, so the race was a perfect metaphor he used often in his writings. And Paul always pointed out that Jesus ran the race with him, and he was never alone. Following Jesus involves sacrifice and discomfort, yet it is in the darkest moments of life that Jesus' love and faithfulness become most vivid and real.

In these dark and puzzling times, remain faithful. Jesus is worthy of our focus. This is a time to live out our faith and do good in new ways! Maybe this is a chance to renew faith and to connect with God in new ways. As we run this race together, fix your eyes on Jesus, so as Paul writes in verse 3, *you will not grow weary or lose heart*. Then, like Paul in 1 Timothy 4:7, we can say, *“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”*

Keeping the faith,
Pastor Andrea

P.S. Our parish nurse, Denise Viker, works to keep Desert Cross safe, informed, and connected. She prepares procedures for mitigating the spread, contact tracing, and infection control procedures. She provides quality info to our staff and congregation, is chairing the reopening committee, advocates for families in health care systems, and helps us remain mentally healthy. Watch [here](#) for Denise's suggestions for play in a time of great stress.