

Pastors' Pen: TRUST

We're nearly to 2021. 2020 is the year we'd like to forget—or at the very least, if forgetting is not possible, we can admit it was a year filled with acute and piercing soul pain. COVID, race relations at the breaking point, riots, deaths, lootings, political accusation, presidential impeachment, acrimonious political upheaval and elections with unresolve. Lawlessness, criminal conduct in law enforcement, and many great law enforcement officials feeling unsupported.

We've been through governmental decrees—masks, no masks, meetings, no meetings, essential services, and the entire redefining of the church in America where political people deem it unnecessary and label our gatherings as “super-spreader” events. But the church IS essential and fighting through the demonic maze to keep the church doors open, to maintain community in a world where we are divided and isolated, has been the challenge for every pastor, leader, ministry, and church.

2020 has seen the necessity for many pastors to move rapidly on-line to some sort of livestream event and struggle to make community real and relevant when isolation was being required across the land. The faithful have remained faithful; some have stopped attending church altogether, some have switched churches like changing channels on television. Pastors across America had to quickly adapt to technology methods new to them and gather in live stream assemblies, and shift to new ways of keeping community.

But in this land of technology mass meetings, discouragement is easy to find. Someone else always does it better—with better equipment, better graphics, better technology, and possibly better singers and instrumentalists for teams for worship. And the small church pastor feels, at times, even more reduced by the competition and distant from the people he/she loves and serves.

Many immune compromised parishioners have remained at home since March—some not able to move into on-line technologies and some choosing to not even try. But the isolation is taking its toll. Addictions are skyrocketing. Depression is a reality. Recently, Bishop Mark Chironna quoted a recent study which concluded that 75% of adults, ages 25-75, are “languishing” in mental health, not “flourishing.” Suicidal thoughts are rampant along with attempts, drug and alcohol usage, and pornography—all have increased, even in the church.

What are we to do? TRUST. Yes. TRUST. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding (Prov 3:5-6) Jesus knows you, sees you, hears you—even when you think He doesn't. Jesus has shut us up to Himself—if we will answer that call.

How much longer will all this last? No one knows. Conspiracy theories abound but they only serve to breed frustration, mistrust, accusation and separation—all playing into the hands of a further divided nation, family, fellowship. And we know who wins in that scenario.

Instead, let's trust. Trust that Jesus is unmoved from His position, from His headship, from His Lordship. Trust and pray for your pastors and leaders and put aside criticisms and choose love instead. Choose thanksgiving and to praise those who serve—on the front lines in the health professions and on the front lines of our spiritual professions. Let's trust that Jesus continues to order our steps in His direction (Ps. 37:23), and let's keep growing.

Live in the Word of God and do a deep dive in your Bible reading and study. Rehearse essential truths and foundations of your faith. Grow in prayer, and practice community—phone calling, on-(Matthew 25:3-11)line gatherings, in every capacity and method available, and in person gatherings when you can. Give and continue to give regularly to your local church family. We respond to God's goodness to us with tithes and offerings and we continue to support our local expression of His family and the ministries to which it is called. Move out of your comfort zone and reach your neighbor with love and grace. Work toward the healing of the divisions in our society and our nation. And pray—WITH thanksgiving for your family, your friends and neighbors, and your church.

As we move into 2021, let's give thanks for life—which is more precious than ever. Let's TRUST and believe Jesus for a new day and that He will continue to lead us forward in a new way. We don't know what 2021 will bring but we DO know that Jesus is still leading us on in Him. Let's be sure our "lamps are filled with oil" (Mt. 25:3-11) and continue to be fashioned and formed in a cross-shaped life that transforms us further into the image of Jesus than ever before. Let's welcome in a new year with new celebration. Let's choose TRUST.

God bless you,

Pastors Kevin & Sherri Hunter,

Grace Christian Center, Port Ludlow, WA