Dear friends,

Pitkin County Public Health has issued their third amendment to their public health order, which you can read [here](https://drive.google.com/file/d/105_4rcocyThk9f2PelXEz0CAamUP0kS_/view). In essence, we are all required to stay at home except to shop for food or other necessities. While I fully understand and support the medical reasoning behind the order, I can’t help but wonder where the world is headed when liquor and pot stores are exempt from the order and churches are not. That said, I recognize that several of the worst outbreaks of coronavirus around the world occurred because religious communities insisted on meeting, despite warnings from public health authorities.

In order to comply with the new public health order, we will no longer be able to live stream a service on Sundays from the Aspen Chapel. I will continue to use Facebook Live to post a meditation and brief prayer service at 8:00 AM each Sunday. You will be able to watch this live, or if sleeping in is part of your coping mechanism, you can watch it anytime throughout the week. For those of you who do not like Facebook, I would note an article in Tuesday’s New York Times entitled, “Coronavirus Revives Facebook as a News Powerhouse”. For all its flaws, Facebook is proving to be a useful platform during this pandemic.

In addition to Facebook, I will be posting the text of my meditations on the CEC website. During Holy Week I will post additional meditations and live stream Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services on Facebook. I encourage all of you to find your own rituals to strengthen your spiritual lives during this time of stress. As I mentioned Sunday, saying the Lord’s Prayer while washing your hands is a food place to start. Don’t forget to dye Easter eggs or bake (or buy) hot cross buns. I am looking forward to breaking my Lenten fast (no dessert) with chocolate and jelly beans.

While my duties as your bridge priest were due to expire on Easter, given growing travel restrictions, I will remain in place until the vestry can hire and safely move an interim into Aspen. I long to meet all of you face to face, but that happy day will need to wait until this pandemic is history. That day will come, and given my deep roots in this community, I will be here to celebrate that day with you in person.

TS Eliot was both one of the greatest poets of the twentieth century and one of the most profound theologians in the Anglican Church. I often turn to his masterpiece of spiritual poetry, *The Four Quartets*, when I am looking for inspiration. *The Four Quartets* are four related poems written between 1935 and 1942 during the prelude to and beginning of the Second World War. In them Eliot reflects on his Anglo-Catholic faith, time and eternity, often with echoes of the brutality of war in the background.

The second of the quartets, *East Coker*, was written in 1940, during the Blitz, when the German Air Force rained death and destruction on England. Eliot used the image of a hospital where staff, though wounded themselves, struggled to heal the wounds of those injured in the Blitz. The wounded surgeon stands for Jesus and the dying nurses his helpers. In our current context they remind me of the brave health care workers who are risking their lives as they combat the coronavirus. Phrases such as “to be restored, our sickness must grow worse.” And “The whole earth is our hospital” seem like they were written this week. Eliot pulls these themes together with a reference to the eucharist we cannot safely celebrate now and to the culmination of our season of Lent, Good Friday.

May Eliot’s words help you meditate on the mystery of the cross in light of the suffering spreading around the world today.

Peace be with you,

The Rev. Steve Ayres

*The Four Quartets, East Coker,* part IV

The wounded surgeon plies the steel

That questions the distempered part;

Beneath the bleeding hands we feel

The sharp compassion of the healer's art

Resolving the enigma of the fever chart.

Our only health is the disease

If we obey the dying nurse

Whose constant care is not to please

But to remind of our, and Adam's curse,

And that, to be restored, our sickness must grow worse.

The whole earth is our hospital

Endowed by the ruined millionaire,

Wherein, if we do well, we shall

Die of the absolute paternal care

That will not leave us, but prevents us everywhere.

The chill ascends from feet to knees,

The fever sings in mental wires.

If to be warmed, then I must freeze

And quake in frigid purgatorial fires

Of which the flame is roses, and the smoke is briars.

The dripping blood our only drink,

The bloody flesh our only food:

In spite of which we like to think

That we are sound, substantial flesh and blood—

Again, in spite of that, we call this Friday good.

TS Eliot, 1940

Vestry/Search Committee news

The Christ Church vestry and search committees are meeting this week to interview via Zoom a candidate for interim rector and to attend to more routine parish business. Please pray for the vestry, search committee and candidate to discern where the Holy Spirit is leading them.