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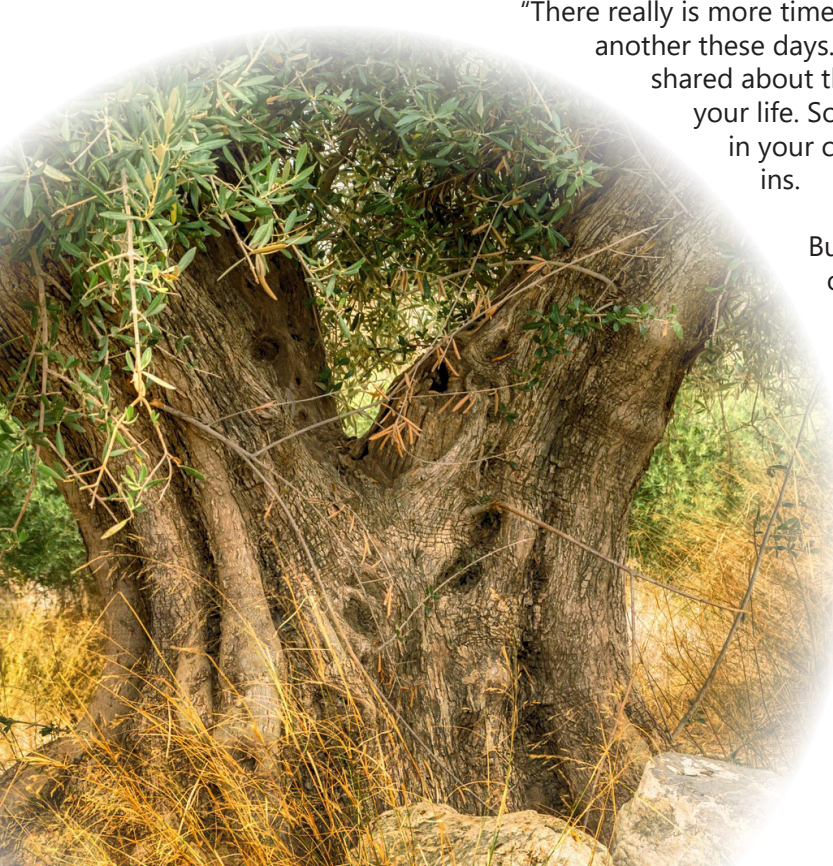
by Bishop Patricia Lull
May 18, 2020

With Governor Walz's announcement that we are moving from stay-at-home to stay-safe orders, it is still important that we each continue to do our part to insure the safety of our neighbors and our self. The church community plays a vital role in modeling wise public health practices even as we step into the summer months and we are still many steps and many months away from returning to the kind of church gatherings that we enjoyed last summer. The same is true for our work and social lives.

One of the things I have embraced during these weeks of working from home is the discipline of looking up the meaning of words that I encounter for a first time. One of those is this word thigmomorphogenesis. It is a biological word that describes the effect that outside forces like wind have on the growth of a tree. A tree that develops such wind-firm features models an adaptive response in an adverse environment. Such trees will be shorter but wider, have thicker trunks and branches, and grow a stronger root system.

We are in a thigmomorphogenesis season as Christians. As one of the deans said in a Zoom call this week, "There really is more time to delve deeply into scripture and to pray for one another these days." I am grateful for the stories many of you have shared about the daily faith practices you have incorporated into your life. Some of those practices include reaching out to others in your congregation through phone trees and regular check-ins.

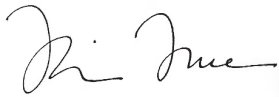
But the strong roots and thick branches we are developing also need to extend to our neighbors in great need. We know that people in our own communities and our global partners in Guatemala and Tanzania are greatly burdened during this pandemic. Many are without employment and their daily needs for food and safe shelter are urgent. Most of us have some wealth we can share and I know that some who have received a federal stimulus check have decided to dedicate all or part of that to others. That direct reaching out beyond ourselves – remembering the needs of the poor – is an ancient Christian response to God's grace and mercy in our lives.



Other needs have also come into clear focus as we experience the impact of this COVID-19 virus. News reports remind us of long-standing health disparities across the population and the statistics are startling. Data reveals that African-American and Latino and new immigrant populations have borne a greater portion of the infections in this country. Outright attacks on the Asian population remind us that we still have work to do to address bigotry and racism even within the East Metro where we live. These are not matters to put on the agenda "for the future"; the contours of our actions need to be addressed now. Attitude and actions are not random but grow out of our deepest convictions.

In every generation, the community of faith has turned to God. "When the cares of my heart are many, your consolations cheer my soul," (Psalm 94:19) we sing with others around the globe. We still have a long way to go, friends, but we are not alone and what we are learning will fit us for the years and days of ordinary living on the far side of this pandemic season.

In good faith,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patricia Lull". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "P" and "L".

Bishop Patricia Lull

SAINT PAUL AREA SYNOD

651-224-4313 | info@spas-elca.org

www.spas-elca.org