

The Lord is my sheperd, I shall not want.

I chose the 23rd Psalm for our scripture reading today because it has always been my favorite scripture even though having been raised in the Catholic church I didn't know much about psalms. But we'll get to today's specific reason later.

For those of you who may not know, we are celebrating outside today in remembrance of Covid and our first deracho. We decided shortly after that time that we should have an annual parking lot service to remind us of how we didn't need a building to be a church family.

It was late February of 2020 that we first heard rumblings about this new virus that was sweeping through Europe and was soon expected to reach the US. Early in March, it had become a pandemic and recommendations were out to sit six feet apart in large gatherings and wear face masks. At the advice of our conference, St. Paul's decided to close it's doors for a "short" time, probably a month or so until the danger had passed. Early on, we lost members of our church family to this disease. Deaths continued for several months and actually still continue, just not as many. In order to connect with each other, we amped up our emails and facebook coverage. I find that as time has passed that I have forgotten details. I know our pastor at the time did

a mid-week Psalm and Song that was greatly enjoyed and aired on Facebook

As the weather warmed up, we moved to having outside services. We missed the fellowship. Here we sat 6 feet apart and wore masks and no treats were served afterward. Several of these services were led by the Diaconate. Mary Beth was hesitant to expose herself to the group as she was pregnant but later on she did conduct them as well as funerals.

Just as we were starting to discuss what we would do as the weather changed, a previously unknown weather phenomenon hit Madrid in August of 2020. The derecho which was supposed to only hit every 500 years or so hit us like a ton of bricks. Many previously tree lined streets were stripped to the ground, into the streets, or on our homes. Everyone seems to have their own story to tell. No one was completely spared including our church. The stately evergreen tree that towered between the church and parsonage was blown over as well as trees on the west side onto the roof. Ceiling tiles were knocked off and the roof was leaking. Thankfully there was no structural damage to the building. There have been reports of other derechos since then but mostly they have not affected anyone in nearly the same manner. In short order, the roof was repaired, the ceiling tiles put back up, and we returned to the sanctuary before cold weather. You may think that this is the end of the story

but it's not. We returned to the sanctuary without pastor. She had taken another position in the PA/NJ area.

Now, back to today's scripture. THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD, I SHALL NOT WANT.

Here we were with no pastor, few pastors knew how to livestream from their homes and none were willing to come to us, and we had a much smaller core congregation. How were we going to continue to worship together safely and less importantly how could we pay our bills? This is where the details start to fade away. I don't remember who suggested what or how we found out about certain things that we could try. This congregation buckled down and figured out through prayer and trust in the Lord. Not everything worked. We had the strength to change. We have come out on the other side stronger with a deeper understanding of our connection with God. We have continued to live stream to bring in those who can't attend in person. Our bulletins are used by a member of our congregation to teach to other residents at the Madrid Home. Our work with the Food for Kids and the Backpack program is an outreach to the community that has been noticed and commended by other town congregations. We don't do it for the recognition but hopefully the recognition will inspire others.

The Lord is our shepherd. We shall not want.