

May 21, 2020

**“Our mission is to celebrate God’s transforming Love in Jesus, by following where Jesus’ Love is calling us to serve the community”**



## Ascension This Week

### Pauses and Plateaus – from Fr Bill Baker

On Sunday, May 24

— All services, classes and meetings held in Church of the Ascension are cancelled until July 1, 2020. We continue to have morning prayer and the Sunday Eucharist Service on Facebook, and now have added weekly Bible Study and a virtual coffee hour on Sundays on Zoom.

**God loves you.  
No exceptions.**   
The Episcopal Church Welcomes You. [www.dohio.org](http://www.dohio.org)

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taking place weekly on  
Zoom.

Lately, my prayers have focused on the importance of pauses. On Monday, before Morning Prayer, I invited our listeners to send me their thoughts about how we might use a break, a pause and even a plateau to motivate us or to share the significance of them in spiritual development. A number of you reached out to me and I am very appreciative for your ideas, thoughts, (even a few) prayers and for sharing with me the value of feeling like our goals or even our lives might appear to be paused. Today, we all write this newsletter article.

The reason for today’s topic is personal. I shared a couple of weeks ago that during this world-wide pause, I decided to jumpstart my diet and exercise and make some healthier choices towards improving my physical health. I want to back the story up and give you a few more details.

In the early fall, my pinched nerve started bothering and in order to be approved for physical therapy, my medical doctor needed to give me a physical examination. My regular doctor was not available, so another doctor entered the room and started the exam. She was charming and gave me a thorough examination, which included a lot of questions. She approved me for the PT, but before I left the office, she said she need to talk to me about another matter.

Many of you know that last year my cholesterol score reached a very high number. I worked on it steadily and cut the numbers in half without medication. As of my last physical exam, a couple months prior to this one, my doctor said he was happy with the progress and keep up the good work. I remember thinking at the time that I thought I had dodged a bullet. My numbers were lower and I had worked at it, but they were still considered over the acceptable limits.

So it won’t surprise the reader to know that the other doctor, the one not normally assigned to me, said she had read my chart and that my doctor was too easy on me about the cholesterol. At first, I was surprised because that wasn’t the reason for my visit, but then we started a conversation. I asked what she suggested and she said to stop using a low-carb diet and switch to something that limits calories and to make more of a lifestyle change.

She asked my weight. I gave her the number and she said that she wanted me to lose 35 pounds. I told her I had not weighed that much since I was in my 20’s and she said she thought it was attainable. She suggested that if I got to that weight and my cholesterol was still high, I would know that I had no choice but to take medicine to regulate it. I left the office with a lot to ponder.

I thought and prayed about what the doctor said and I decided to try a new approach. I signed up for a program that strictly monitored calories, or in this case points and around Thanksgiving I committed to a plan and to myself. Results happened. Just before Christmas time, I was down 6 or 7 pounds and feeling healthier, more energetic and committed.

As part of the plan, you can attend meetings. During a workshop, just before the holidays, the leader suggested that people make a decision about eating for the next few weeks. Many people said they would commit themselves to just not gaining during Christmas and New Years. A few people said they would see her next year, meaning they were taking off from the program and would recommit just after the New Year. I felt certain that I would stay on the plan, even with a trip to Australia looming.

Actually, the day before Christmas, I stopped counting points. It represented neither a choice nor something I had been thinking about. I did think about my eating during the holidays and during our trip to Australia. Every place we stayed on our vacation had a gym and most days, Mohsin and I worked out. We walked a lot of places during our Australian Adventure, but I did not use the app to count points. When we got back at the end of January, I weighed in and found that, unbeknownst to me, my first pause occurred. I had not gained or lost any weight during the extended holidays or my birthday and trip Down Under.

I started back in Mid-February and recommitted. I lost a couple more pounds and then by Mid-March the world hit a pause. Covid 19 arrived in the US and hit NYC hard. Actually, the virus was in Australia during our trip and we left a couple of days before Australia started limiting travel. Think about that for a moment.

During the last couple of months, I really committed to eating at home, cooking meals that used less points and getting outside to walk the dogs most days (even in the rain) for at least an hour. Suddenly the pounds melted off. I felt focused. During two months of the pandemic, I managed to lose more weight than I had lost in the previous 4 months. With the total pushing 25 pounds a few weeks ago, I found myself at my pre-seminary weight.

I confess, when I started the new program, even though the doctor thought I should lose enough weight to weight what I did in my 20's my original goal was 25 pounds. Feeling pretty satisfied and knowing that I could use the program and the app for free once I reach my goal weight, I spoke to someone at the program. I shocked me to find out that their goal for me, based on a preset formula, was to lose 30 pounds.

I wanted to wiggle or beg. I explained that I was happy with 25 pounds, but the program coach told me I would need a doctor's note to change the amount. I always try to put a positive spin on life, so I told the coach, I would just work toward losing 30 pounds. Then I hit a plateau!! SLAM!

For a week, with the exception of one cheat day, I stayed on the plan, but I also rested at 25 pounds lost. The next week, I decided not to cheat. Same result. No loss, no gain. I weigh myself every day, so I actually knew the results before the official weigh-in. The plateau felt like failure. One week with some cheating, I understood not losing. Two weeks with no movement felt stifling. I started to question myself and more importantly, to judge myself. It felt like I worked so hard for nothing. All the while the Zoom meetings were happening and I smiled and laughed telling everyone about my "success". I did feel somewhat happy about the accomplishment, but I also felt frustrated.

Then I decided to stop counting points for a week. I reached out to some trusted friends and shared my doubt. Then on Monday, during Morning Prayer on Facebook, I asked all of you for ideas. So many of you shared your thoughts and encouragement and a couple of people offered to pray for me. I also decided to pray and in my daily meditation the last few days I focused on the usefulness of pause. Some of you might want to do this, in light of the pandemic, especially if you feel frustration already or in the days to come.

Wisdom rushed me. Guidance pounced on me. Gratitude found a way back into my heart. This is what our collective wisdom tells us today. Pauses and plateaus happen and are necessary! When we take a pause or life gives us one (whether we want them or not) we need to embrace them. My biggest obstacle to understanding the need to stop and reflect, centered around the feeling that I was "stuck". Since pauses are natural, we need to move past the stuck feelings.

One person suggested using the example of babies. They seem to grow fast, but then they hit a plateau and nothing specific to their development seems to happen for long periods. But we know that a lot of growing in babies happens while they are asleep and that their growth happens in spurts. We, too, need to recognize that we cannot always see when growth occurs and we do learn something from times when it seems we are asleep or that seem dark.

Another person offered a very poignant reflection, which I spent time meditating on this week. When we hit a plateau, we need to acknowledge how we got there, in this case a lot of dedication, AND we need to ask ourselves if we are satisfied? In my prayers and meditations this weeks I asked if I was satisfied with 25 pounds. Of course, I heard that still voice of God telling me to keep going. What I started is not finished yet. Tuesday, I started counting point again and I set a new goal. For now it is 30 pounds, but it ultimately might change to 35. Who knows, I might soon weigh what I did in my 20's....

Blessings, Fr Bill+

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### Our Pledges

Many thanks to those who have been sending in their pledges! While we are all preoccupied with the uncertainty of these times and the pandemic, doing this one normal thing helps us keep our lives in focus. Please continue dropping your pledge in the mail to us.

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**Ascension**

**Home:** We gaze upward, because we love the one who has taken our hearts with him to our eternal home. We gaze down because this is our sphere of action. And we gaze around because these are the holy companions with whom we journey homeward and find ourselves already home.

**Save the Date Reminders and Announcements:**

**As announced by Bishop Dietsche congregations will not be meeting in the churches until July 1.**

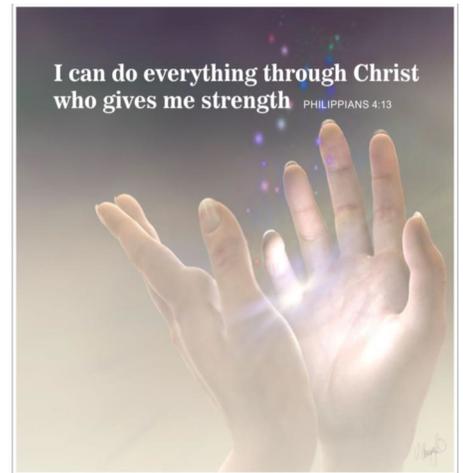
**We will continue with Morning Prayer and Sunday Church Services at Ascension on Facebook for at least the duration of the time that churches are closed to congregations. Please join us at 9:30am weekdays, and 10:00am on Sundays.**

**ZOOM at Ascension**

Bible Study with Fr Bill is now meeting weekly on Zoom— Wednesdays at 2:00pm.

Also on Sundays at 11:00 am after the Eucharist Service we are holding a virtual coffee hour on Zoom.

Please notify Liz via email if you want to attend these events. Zoom assigns a new http address, meeting ID and password every week, so you will need the current information from Liz.



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**Update on Gene Darconte**

Jill, Gytha’s sister, reports that Gene is gradually being weaned off the ventilator and will hopefully be breathing on his own soon. Naturally he cannot have visitors due to Covid but was happy to see his cousin visit him through his hospital window. They feel he has made a lot of progress in the past ten days, but is not out of the woods yet.

Many of you have asked for a way to send Gene your thoughts and prayers for his recovery. We have learned that someone is picking up Gene's mail and bringing him cards, letters, etc. Please send them to his Nevada address which is:

**Eugene Darconte  
9120 Blazing Fir Court  
Las Vegas, Nevada 89117**

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