

Dear Friends of Trinity,

Let us pray: Ever-living God, strengthen and sustain *the leaders of your church*, that with patience and understanding they may love and care for your people. Grant that together *we may all* follow in the way of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (Pastors and Bishops (*Modified*), ELW, pg. 73)

Today's Scripture: "Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God..." – (1 Peter 4:11a)

I've been having a hard time writing lately. It's not because I'm not thinking about stuff. My brain is fully engaged. Sometimes, it seems to be working overtime. But when I sit down to write, nothing seems to happen.

A few days ago, a Facebook post by my cousin, Angie Cooper, seemed to help me understand. She lives in Chicago, Illinois, and writes a blog about sustainable living in her urban setting. On Monday, she wrote: "I've been having a hard time getting my thoughts out of my head and onto the page lately... There's a lot going on in the old noggin, but organizing any of it into words that don't sound like non-sensical blather has been a struggle."

When I read that, I thought to myself, "That's it! That's exactly how I feel! That's precisely the problem that I seem to be having!" Angie went on to say that her difficulties seemed to have something to do with the big decisions she, her husband and their two daughters are facing this summer. Things like "school, work, family and friends" were weighing down on her. Those things used to be easy. We knew when they would begin, what we would do, who we would see and how we would go about our living. But these days, everything has to be thought out, the risks have to be calculated, our movements plotted on a map, and our contacts considered and cleared before we go anywhere. It's exhausting!

In the last few weeks, we've turned down two opportunities to gather with friends and family. We didn't think we could do it, given the risks involved. We felt really bad about missing out on the events, but we also thought we needed to be cautious for our own protection. Two members of the host family for the first event have now tested positive for Covid-19. Four of the others are showing symptoms. One is symptom free. We're glad we weren't exposed. So far, no illnesses have resulted from the second gathering, as far as we know. We're glad for that too.

We've also seen some things during this same time that we never thought possible. Expressions of public anger, personal disrespect, obvious defiance and disregard for the concerns of others have become more and more frequent. Open rebellion against healthy guidelines are now commonplace. It makes my brain hurt and my heart go numb. What can be done? How can I speak words? When will it all end? The scripture I quoted above is no help. As one who is called to speak "the very words of God," the task is more than daunting.

Cousin Angie says we may not be able to deal with all the big stuff. We'll have to start with the little things that we can control. Her list of the easy stuff includes "tent, pool, music, ice cream." I'm not sure my list is quite the same, but "sun, deck, chair, warmth." Maybe if I take my work outside, I'll be able to get something done. Who knows? My thoughts may just finally turn into words!

Peace be with you, Pastor Art