



# THE BT TIMES

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We are Better Together  
August 2020

## Is Anything the Same?

Last Sunday was supposed to be our first gathering in person. We did not gather. Baltimore City faced a spike in COVID cases. Things changed. We went back to Plan B.

What exactly was Plan B?

It's easier to describe the process of making a Plan B than it is to explain exactly what it is because it keeps changing. The thing is, life isn't changing. Babies are being born. Brothers are diagnosed with cancer. Gardens are producing zucchini the size of the Holland Tunnel. Mothers and friends, die. Lightning bugs are sticking around longer than ever this year. Caregivers are making due when the day-nurse doesn't show up because there's a tropical storm. The last full moon rose in absolute glory. Parents are improvising as if their lives depend on it because schools aren't opening this fall.

Is anything the same?

Pastor Stewart would make the argument that God is God, and we are not alone, and faith will lead us through this time of trial.

Many years ago, I was the heretic in the back of a bible study class that he was teaching at St. Margaret's Church in Annapolis (I actually thought he was moderating, but that's just me), and every once and a while he would

look at me and say, "What now?" And I would emphatically object to the idea that we should gloss over the capricious punishment that God had meted out to tens of thousands of people.

It's not that simple.

God is God. God is love. We are taught to love our neighbors as ourselves. We are brought up to think that church is community at its best, and like Pavlov's Dog, we associate coming to church on Sundays with God and prayer and love and being in community. It's not the same on Zoom.

Not the same at all. Nothing is the same.

But that moment on Pentecost, that sweet and bittersweet moment of seeing all of those people, our beloved congregation, take a bite of the pre-consecrated challah rolls that had shown up the day before, in little red bags on their doorsteps...

Some of you held up the bread, closed your eyes, waited for a moment, and then took communion. Some stared at the screen, and when the time came, tore off a piece of bread, and with all the grace that ever was, they shared the bread. Was God watching?

Can we keep our faith at this moment when even Plan B needs constant revision? Beirut

and part of our own city just exploded. There are countries with few resources and a pandemic wildly out of control. Millions of people are out of work. In the year 2020, can we count our blessings? Can we find new ways of being a community? Can we check in on our friends to make sure they have what they need? Can we show up on Wednesdays for Compline, or Thursdays for bible study, and on Sunday morning? Can we enter into a new covenant?

God was watching. God is watching.

Pandemic or war or strife or famine. Plan B or Plan Z, God is here. God is still the same, yesterday, today and tomorrow. We are God's plan.  
*Carolyn*



## Stewart's Stewings on Plan B

I think it is important to remember just how hard this all is. And we have to give thanks week by week for the little and the big things.

Many people seemed to have just 'hit a wall.' There is no explaining it; it just is. And yet we have made it through another week...together. Remember, this is hard, and you are not alone. No one has been able to make Plan A work!

So on Sunday, we got creative and went with Plan B. We celebrated our second baptism of this pandemic. (We baptized Betsy Dunn's granddaughter a few weeks ago with a smaller family zoom event straight from the hospital.) As part of our 10:30 am Zoom church service, we walked outside to the Memorial Garden to baptize Iris Penater, granddaughter of Judy Jones. Larry Hylton sang and since David Neff is on vacation, Plan B included Paul Baroody on piano!



It is no coincidence that the baptism took place in the Memorial Garden. Every day we are dying and being reborn again. We are immersed into the waters of baptism and die with Christ, but we are raised to new life with him, the one we live now and the one we will live in eternity.

## LEAD Team Small Groups

The LEAD team's work has continued during these unusual times. We welcomed John McConnell to the team and have met regularly via Zoom. In more normal circumstances, our next step would be a more in-depth congregational survey, followed by small group meetings for deeper discussions. Based on where things are now, we have decided to start with the small group discussions, and let those conversations inform the questions in the broader survey. We'll begin by reading part of Acts 8 together. If you want to read ahead, that would be great.

We're starting with two of our already-scheduled Zoom gatherings, plus one other:

**Wednesday, August 12**, during our regular Wednesday Night Live at 7:30 pm.

**Wednesday, August 19**, at 10:30 am (when the Wednesday bible study group was meeting).

**Thursday, August 20**, during the Thursday bible study at 11:00 am.

We will schedule additional sessions and are exploring ways to connect with those who are unable to join via Zoom. So please join us - we want to hear your voice.

### Some questions to ponder:

What is our mission? What opportunities can we identify?

How are we supporting and serving each other, and our community during this time? What adjustments do we need to make to our approach to serving the world, now and in the future?

Peace and love,

Margaret Dowding, Harold Hardinger, Barbara Herron, John McConnell, Kari Rudgers, and Diane Thornton

## VIRTUAL WORSHIP GUIDE

Wednesday Night Live @ 7:30 pm

Thursday Bible Study @ 11:00 am

Sunday Zoom Worship @ 10:30 am

Zoom Links are found at:

[www.nativitycomforter.org](http://www.nativitycomforter.org).

The Delaware-Maryland Synod at 10:00am

at <https://demdsynod.org/digital-worship/>.

The Episcopal Diocese of Maryland worships

at 11:00am [www.marylandepiscopalian.org](http://www.marylandepiscopalian.org).







Birthdays  
Graduations  
Family

