



the EPISCOPAL DIOCESE of UPPER SOUTH CAROLINA

The Fifth Thursday of Lent, 2020

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we continue to navigate these uncertain waters of distance and anxiety, I am heartened by stories of creativity, connection, improvisation and compassion across the Diocese and into our wider communities. These many acts of care for one another and for those who are especially vulnerable during this pandemic are deeply inspiring, for COVID-19 has not passed us by. We've received growing reports of parishioners infected by the virus and have lost one beloved soul to the disease, Karen Pearson of St. Michael & All Angels, Columbia. I pray daily for each of you who've been directly affected by the disease, for clergy and lay leaders who are working so hard to keep members in contact with each other and to make worship possible, for all parishioners in every congregation and your extended families and friends, as we all strive to run with perseverance this new race—in faith, hope and love.

I've been especially grateful for the technological advances that have given us so many new ways to stay in touch. Families, church members, business connections, colleagues, and whoever we need to reach seem closer than we'd have expected, thanks to technology. The blessings in our newly found and practiced skills will undoubtedly extend far beyond this time of pandemic.

The pandemic has also inspired countless reflections on who we are in Christ and how we live faithfully in, through and with such a time. I have been moved and challenged by a reflection published in *Time Magazine* this past Sunday by the renowned Anglican New Testament scholar, theologian and Bishop in the Church of England, N.T. Wright, [*Christianity Offers No Answers About the Coronavirus. It's Not Supposed To.*](#) Pointing us to the Psalms as the Bible's own response to travail, he reminds us that when answers are hidden and times are desperate, lament brings us more closely into God's presence. Even when, in our psalmic lament, we see no way out of our plight and find ourselves shaking our fists at God, we can still give thanks. All but one Psalm of lament (88) names a blessing in the midst of pain—a cry of gratitude to God—for God's love and mercy.

As we approach what will be, for most of us, the first Holy Week and Easter season in memory to be followed by an extended, global fast filled with uncertainty, we continually ask, "How can I ground and center my soul for life in the middle of it all?" In our sadness at continuing apart-ness and losses, lament seems meet and right, and psalmic gratitude may or may not come quickly. We are a community of many people, some with many resources, some

with very few, and those with the least may, paradoxically find themselves with the most to lament, the most lost.

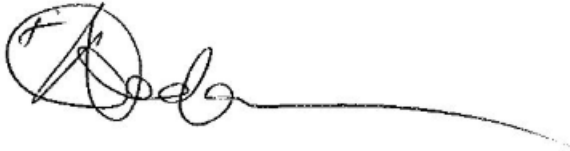
Yet, we are one in Christ. In lament, we may well discover renewed compassion for all God's people, turning in new ways to each other and especially to the "least of these who are members of my family."

Weeping may spend the night, but joy comes in the morning. (Ps 30:6)

We know not how long the night before us will be, and yet I am strengthened by God, who is my strong rock, a castle to keep me safe, my crag and my stronghold, *(Ps 31:3,5)* into whose hands I commended my spirit long ago when I was sealed by the Holy Spirit in baptism, and marked as Christ's own forever.

May God's peace be with each and every one of you in the days and weeks ahead.

Blessings in the name of Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew Waldo". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

The Rt. Rev. Andrew Waldo