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"Rituals & Routines" (from your Community Wellness Co-Ordinator)

*"After the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James,
and Salome bought spices to go and anoint the body of Jesus."*

Mark 16:1 Good News Translation

After almost six weeks of isolation and working from home, I am finally settling into some new routines. I have consolidated my 'work' into one room that I try to only enter between 9-5. Saturday has become 'my new Sunday' and I get up, shower, and dress as if for church, then proceed to video my service from one corner of my office, now staged as a pulpit area. The bonus of this new routine, is that I get to take Sunday and Monday off. Two days off in a row is virtually unheard of in ministry, so I am appreciating this unexpected gift of much needed Sabbath rest.

After the initial upheaval of our schedules and day to day lives, you too might be establishing some new routines in your isolated homelife. For most people, the regularity of routines helps contribute to our sense of wellbeing. Having things unfold in predictable patterns offers comfort and security, especially in times of great disruption.

Rituals are another way in which humans find meaning and comfort. From a psychological standpoint, rituals entail 'consciously performing symbolic behavior.' Ancient and primitive cultures intuitively understood the importance of such actions, often developing formal rituals or sacred ceremonies they felt brought them into direct contact with their deities.

But rituals are not simply remnants of a superstitious past. They are necessary and helpful to connect with others and nurture our emotional health. As church goes, we too are steeped in rituals – from our sacraments of baptism and communion, to the structure of our worship services and committee meetings; to the rituals of our shared fellowship at potluck suppers and church coffee hours. We might all be missing the constancy and consolation of these reliably regular activities.

Jungian analyst Robert A. Johnson writes that "modern people who are deprived of meaningful ritual feel a chronic sense of emptiness."¹ We have an instinctive hunger for significant rituals, without which our spiritual lives are impoverished. Hence in the aftermath of tragedies, people feel compelled to create shrines and build memorials, or as with this week's massacre in Nova Scotia, to put a lit candle in the window. These concrete actions don't change outcomes, but do offer comfort.

One of the many heartbreaking consequences of this pandemic, is the loss of occasions to personally gather and share together in meaningful rituals, whether communally grieving at funerals or more joyful memorable celebrations. But as I like to seek opportunity in every crisis, I wonder if we might find creative new ways of symbolically marking such significant events? I would love to hear what innovative rituals you are devising during these unprecedented times, while life and death continue to carry on and the human spirit continues to prove resilient.

Grace to you, and peace,

Elise

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*"Our relationship with God and each other strengthens us, and helps make the world a better place.
We welcome and include **everyone** into congregational life."*

¹ "Inner Work: Using Dreams & Active Imagination for Personal Growth" Robert A. Johnson, (Harper; 1986) p. 102