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Although sharing much common ground when it comes to philosophy and ministry, often Mary and Bob find themselves approaching ministerial concerns from different angles... *He said - She said* is a venue to share differing perspectives and provide food for thought.

## But What Can I Do?

*Mary's Perspective:*

### **Positive expectations are self-fulfilling.**

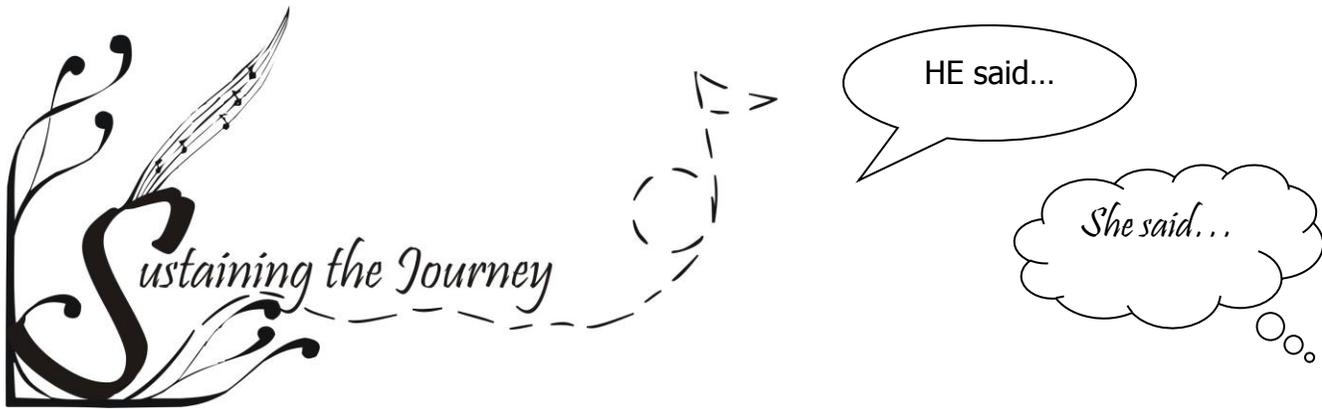
Read that again. The Coronavirus pandemic has changed us all: personally, as a nation, and as a world. For weeks, we have practiced "social distancing". We have reordered our lives and, in many cases, now need to figure out a new pattern for life. Whether it's because of the loss of a job, or the illness or death of a loved one, or even some of the positive leaps in technology that have developed out of necessity, this time in our history will forever be remembered. We cannot go back to the life we once lived. Just as our approach to security changed after September 11, 2001, much of the way we think now will be seen in light of hand-washing, toilet paper hoarding, virtual connections, and virus avoidance.

So now what? We are in the process of emerging from this unprecedented time. Life has moved on, despite not being able to publicly celebrate worship during the holiest liturgical season. Stores have restocked shelves, and we have adapted how we eat to cook more at home. We now have new approaches to being "social", that include virtual gatherings and online learning. So what's next? How do we integrate into societal living and thrive?

Positive expectations are self-fulfilling. I would be remiss not to acknowledge that the opposite is true, too. If I am fearful of rejoining society in person, all pieces of my life will be affected by that. If I dwell on lost opportunities, missed graduations and Easter celebrations, on the "coulda woulda shoulda", then I will miss out on what is coming by continuously looking back. So how do I acknowledge the past but use it to my advantage?

First of all, consider what you learned during the Shelter-at-Home directives. Obviously, that's going to have its own personal factors. For me, I learned that, given the time, I am able to find better balance in life. I'm a decent cook, though I still have absolutely no desire to bake. Ever. I learned that I truly enjoy walks with my husband, walks with a friend, and walks alone. I learned that there is an entire world of podcasts, and those can fuel many walks yet to come. I learned how to cut hair using electric clippers, thanks to my husband's willing and forgiving spirit. I think many learned how much they appreciate communal worship and time spent with one's own offspring. Many learned to navigate new technology, whether it is methods of live-streaming events, or virtual classrooms, or that thing called Zoom.

As we emerge from the pandemic, I believe we are facing a unique opportunity. We can take what we learned while social distancing, and use it to make better choices in life. For example, if facing job loss or change, utilize newly gained technological skills in the job search or in the new career. For teachers and learners, now that the logistics of online learning have been ironed out, supplement in-person experience with online work from home. For institutions that conquered the learning curve of webinars and live-streaming, continue to build a library of digital files that can reach the



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home-bound. Many churches made concerted efforts to connect with their congregations. Continue those efforts, especially reaching out to those who feel disconnected. Whether it's a periodic email or podcast, creating the recordings and regularly writing forced growth in those who were involved. So don't give up on articulating thoughts and writing daily.

Think about your own personal experience. Again, positive expectations are self-fulfilling. I believe that the time at home was a time of immense growth. Leverage that growth, and expect good things to come from it. If you found that you made healthier eating choices, exercised to make your body stronger, and really appreciated the unique quirks of each of your children, how can you use that going forward? For one thing, you've likely established good habits when it comes to eating and exercise - keep up the good work! Recognize how positively those choices have reflected on how your body feels and looks. If you are a musician and made time to practice your instrument, incorporate that new appreciation for practice and tackle a more complicated step in your music development - whether that's learning to play a concerto, or stretching your vocal range, or using the rhythm you strengthened to begin dancing regularly.

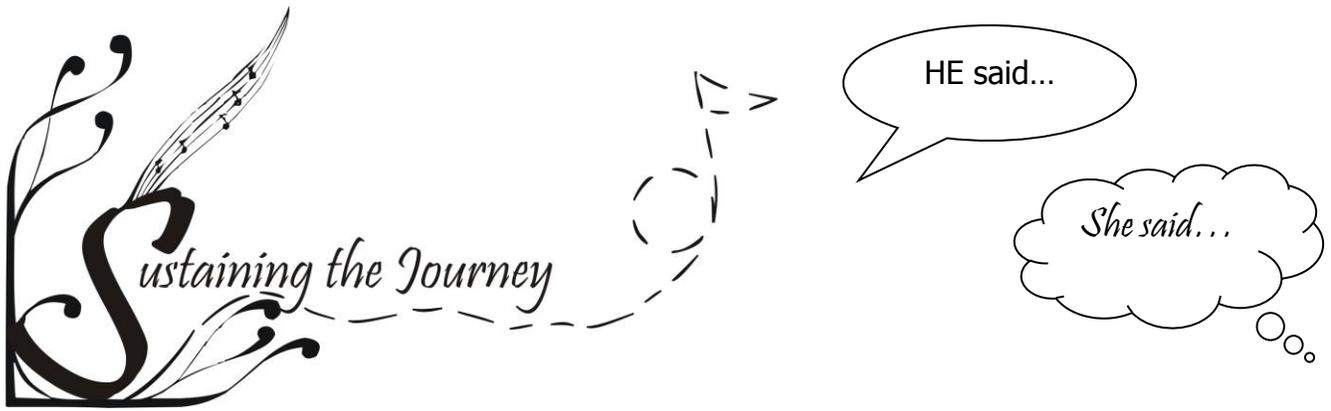
If you expect to use what you learned during the pandemic to make good things happen in life, good things will happen. Career growth, personal development, being better at skills will open doors - if you look for them. Rather than feeling sorry for what was lost, being open to the possibilities actually creates more possibilities. Doors are opening. Be aware of them, and have courage to walk through them!

Positive expectations are self-fulfilling. So, now that we are on the precipice of resuming life, what do you expect?

*Bob's Perspective:*

Throughout all of these last few weeks or so, we've all had to "slam on the brakes," so to speak. On a personal level, I have found that to be a very difficult proposition. What was at first a suddenly empty schedule has become days filled with even more stuff to do. My fear in all of this is that once things return to normal we'll be confronted with an immediate avalanche of activity - leading to massive levels of stress and overload. The trick for all of us is to move back into "normal life patterns" in a gradual progression rather than just jumping into the deep end of the pool. Another thing is to anticipate the return to normal by immediately beginning to live as much of the expected normalcy as possible. For example, my normal Sunday mornings begin about 5:15a.m. Rather than allow myself to sleep in to 8 or 9 (knowing that I'll have to go back) I split the difference and wake about 6:00a.m. I then perform as many of my Sunday morning activities as I am able. This way, my re-entering into the mainstream will be less hectic or traumatic (at least on Sunday mornings).

Best-selling author and radio personality, Dennis Prager is often heard to say, "We all have a moral obligation to be happy." That's very true. Happiness is a choice we make in our lives - and like many other states of being, happiness is contagious. People feed on the energy of others. Think about it. How many times have you walked into a room and found yourself affected by someone else's mood? We're all affected by others - and others by us as well. If we're truly our "brother's keeper" then we have a responsibility to be happy, not only for our sake but for theirs as well. I'm not



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saying that we should all turn into Pollyanna, but making a conscious choice to have a happy attitude and nurturing it will have a positive effect on ourselves and others around us. Especially in times like these (COVID19 days), nurturing a positive attitude and positive habits are imperative in order to keep ourselves healthy – mentally, physically and spiritually. That's good for everybody.

God has also blessed us in these days with a unique chance to slow down and take stock in our lives. It's a time to re-evaluate our relationships, our goals and our dreams, and our lives in general. I leave you with this thought: ([Click here](#)).