

Dear Northern Great Lakes Synod,



The other day, right in the middle of a phone conversation, my office phone suddenly stopped working. I was incredibly irritated, and I yelled into my empty office how I felt about that phone. Several days

later, I was snowshoeing, and my extendable walking pole contracted unexpectedly to about 14 inches, making it useless. Again, I found myself hurling verbal insults at an inanimate object. The snowy and peaceful silence of the wooded trail was shattered as I called my pole “stupid” and tried to forcibly manipulate it back to its appropriate length. But no matter how much I pulled and twisted and complained, it wouldn’t budge. Stupid thing.

With a vaccine being slowly rolled out, it feels like we should be in the homestretch of the pandemic. But the finish line seems to recede the closer we get. If you feel weary and irritable, with no patience for even the smallest inconvenience, you are not alone. We brace ourselves for the big things – loss and death, ongoing challenges to returning to what we miss, the need to be supportive to loved ones, but the little things...they can send us over the edge. Perhaps you too have experienced an adult temper tantrum over something that, pre-pandemic, would have been more manageable. These days, our skin is thinner and our emotions nearer the surface. Criticism that would have bounced off the armor of personal confidence now cuts deep. We have no reserve, no wherewithal, no room in a psyche already full to overflowing to cope rationally with one more thing.

In a presentation about what it takes to be resilient, I learned the number one thing was being realistic. So, let’s be realistic. This is hard. We want to be done. We want to hug and sing and gather around the family table

with loved ones we haven’t had supper with in over a year.

All in good time. The day will come. We just need to wait a ...little...bit...longer. Some months at least.

So, we wait. We wait for our well to be filled, our strength to be renewed, our spirits to be refreshed. I have found that laughter helps...and play. But most of all, I have found that acknowledging the feelings of weariness, naming that I am tired of waiting, and then extending grace to myself and others, goes a long way to getting past it.

The prophet Isaiah has something to say about waiting.

*But those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,  
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,  
they shall run and not be weary,  
they shall walk and not faint.  
~Isaiah 40:31*

Wait with me. Wait for the Lord. Wait for new life, for forward movement, for a fainting spirit to rise up on wings. God is with you, and God is at work; creating vaccines, supporting health care workers, helping leaders think through the details, and offering all of us the promise that with God’s help, our weariness will give way to new strength.

And in the meantime, find joy, in even the little things. It took two pliers, my husband, and a jar opener to get my pole back to its proper length. I’m ready for another snowshoe. If you hear someone yelling “stupid” in the woods, just ignore it.

Yours in Christ,  
Bishop Katherine Finegan

