

## Grace in the Waiting Space

### Stories of Ministry in a Time Apart

*p. 16*

#### A Time for Children

1. When Annie Espinoza was unable to minister to children with her puppets in person, she began to record her messages online and found a much wider audience. What have you had to adapt to during the pandemic that developed into something better than what you had before?
2. What part of Annie Espinoza's story did you find most inspirational?

#### Anointed Grief and the Promise of Revival

1. Nilwona Nowlin emphasizes the loss the Promised Land Covenant Church community has felt to not be able to express their grief in the fullness of their culture. In what ways have you been restricted from true grief during the COVID-19 season?
2. Michael Carrion is quoted as saying, "My community was already in a pandemic before the pandemic started." What does he mean by this?

#### Camp Lament...and Sabbath

1. Many camps were forced to completely cancel their ministry for this season. What service or outreach did your church have to stop due to the coronavirus?
2. Erik Strom refers to this season as an "undesired sabbath." How does this change your own approach to sabbath?

# COVSPARKS

Covenant Companion discussion starters for groups and personal reflection.

## Living Room Liturgies

1. Randall Wilkens says that during the COVID-19 season, worship has become more informal, intergenerational, interactive, and intentional. Which of these aspects has been the most evident in your own online worship experience?
2. Do you think COVID-19 has been more of a crisis or an opportunity for the church?

## Resetting the Table

1. What did you use for communion elements during the worship online season?
2. What do you think Richard Moore means when he says, “Virtual communion still reminds us that we are all part of the universal body of Christ, which, in some sense, has always been somewhat virtual”?

## The Lonely Pulpit

1. Lisa Orris says, “I don’t preach to our congregation. I preach with them.” What does this mean?
2. What does congregational participation look like in your church?

## Waiting for Word

1. Many nursing homes and health institutions restricted visitors during the pandemic. Who were you unable to be with due to strict isolation regulations?
2. Faced with a profound helplessness regarding the nursing home ministry at his church, David Sladkey relies on prayer to be “enough.” What comfort do you receive from prayer in extreme situations such as this?

## There Is No Small Talk in Quarantine

*By Dana Bowman, p. 40*

### **The Education of an Introvert**

1. Dana Bowman says that when she got sober she also recognized that she was an introvert. Does your own identity as an introvert or extrovert change based on seasons or contexts?
2. How did you cope with social distancing during the shelter in place season?
3. Bowman says she has learned that “small talk isn’t small at all.” What do you think she means by that?
4. What have you learned as a result of the pandemic?
5. Where have you seen God’s presence during the pandemic?

## Weeds and Lions

*By Mike Guerrero, p. 15*

1. What connection do you have with gardening—either working in your own yard or enjoying outdoor space in your community?
2. What “deceptively small” worry in your life tends to keep “popping up” like the weeds in Mike Guerrero’s garden?
3. How can we be vigilant about the worries of this world?
4. Can you relate more with the victorious lion tamer or the meticulous weed puller?

## I Can't Go Back to Normal

*By Leeann Younger, p. 35*

### **The road of lament that leads to a new normal**

1. As the country continues to reopen after the COVID-19 restrictions, what “normal” do you hope to return to and what do you hope changes?
2. Leeann Younger asks, “What kind of church will we be?” What steps has your church taken toward justice and solidarity since the pandemic began?
3. How does the perception that self-sufficiency is a sign of success feed injustice?
4. Younger’s note at the end of the column mentions George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery. What other names need to be remembered when we speak of the injustice happening to black Americans?

## For Dominant Christian Culture, It's Excavation or Extinction

*By Jelani Greenidge, p. 48*

### **How conformity robs us of God's creativity**

1. What genre of music do you listen to most often?
2. How would you describe the worship music in your church?
3. What do you think the “existing norms of the contemporary Christian music industry” are?
4. Jelani Greenidge says, “This is a clear example of how institutional racism doesn’t just hurt people of color, it hurts white people too.” What do you think he means?
5. In what other areas, besides music, does the dominant culture need make space for multi-ethnic voices?