

# 525,600 minutes . . . How do you measure a year in a life?

So begins the musical *Rent*, and while I usually belt out this tune annually on December 31 and January 1, it seems appropriate for the month of March 2021.

One year ago, this month, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic. One year ago, this month, I got the automated phone call telling me that Geneseo schools would be suspending student attendance due to the public health concern – the last day of student attendance was March 16. One year ago, this month, our Council met and made the difficult decision to suspend in-person worship and ministry.

Most of us had little to no idea, one year ago this month, what the next 12 months would bring. I thought that the adjustments we were making—mask wearing, staying home, social distancing – would last a few weeks, maybe a few months. I thought, surely by the end of summer, things will be back to “normal.”

But we’ve learned in the past year that “normal” is a relative term. We’ve learned to be flexible and creative. We’ve learned to be resilient. And we’ve also learned how to hold on to hope. We still long for the day when we can sing together, eat together, and worship side by side, no longer concerned about the distance between us.

Since the pandemic began, we have lost loved ones, welcomed new babies, and celebrated with graduating seniors and Confirmands. We have celebrated Easter via Zoom, and Christmas via Facebook Live. We’ve worshipped online and outdoors. We’ve opened the Sanctuary for in-person worship, suspended everything again, and now re-opened. We’ve cancelled and postponed and re-imagined annual traditions.

I can’t predict where the next 12 months will take us, where we will be in March 2022. I hope to be sitting next to you on a cold Wednesday eating a bowl of hot soup in the Fellowship Room! I hope to be singing some of the hymns out of the newly-released hymnal supplement *All Creation Sings*. I hope to be baking (and eating) bread together with our First Communion kids. I hope for these things fervently, but I can’t promise any of them.

What I can promise is that through all of the changes that have come over the past year, and through all of the changes that are yet to come in the year ahead, our God is at our side. God lovingly accompanies us through each change, each disappointment, and each adjustment. God assures us that God’s mercy endures forever, and that God’s love never ends. God reminds us, in surprising new ways, that because Jesus lives, we shall live also. Love will persist, and life will win. This is the promise that will sustain us, through the next 12 months, and then forever and ever.

—Pastor Laura