We will get through this
By Rev. Rick Reynolds

Tonight, over 100 homeless men and women will show up at Nightwatch, hungry, cold, perhaps discouraged. Their hands will be cleaned at the door. They will step in, get something to eat, and be quickly sent to a welcoming shelter off-site. Staff and some volunteers will make sure that food is ready, and that safety is maintained for all.

Night after night, this has been our practice, until this weekend. To keep everyone safe, we are suspending meal service at Nightwatch. We are going to supply pizza this Friday night, thanks to church support. After that, we will be looking for sandwiches in baggies, ready-to-eat food, cookies bagged up. And a reminder: There should be no bare hand contact with ready-to-eat food. Can you help with this?

Nightwatch will keep on trucking, one way or another.

Please pray for safety for all in our community, especially those who are still out in the cold. Be Kind. Be Nightwatch.

Lord, we ask for serenity to accept the things we cannot change, courage to change the things we can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

Collar
By Michael Cox, Street Minister

My boss told me I should wear a clerical collar, so I ordered three clergy shirts and hit the streets. The reaction has been fascinating.

Now people stop me to pray for them and their homeless camp. “Are you a real pastor? Thank you for your time, Father. Thanks for being here!” are the common responses.

People living on the street understand what the collar means. They know we are not case managers, or city workers tracking outcomes. We are not cops. They look at us from their tent and ask, “What church are you from?” The collar is an invitation to participate in the Kingdom of God.

Monday night I prayed with four people. Alex wanted prayer for his back. “It feels better, thanks for praying, Father!” Terrance grabbed my hand and yelled through a mouth full of booze, “Bless me pastor!” Jerry and I prayed for healing, finances, and peace on the steps of the bookstore. Donnie told me to pray as I felt led.

Donnie is someone I have known since he was a kid, twenty years ago. He’s in his thirties now and in rough shape. He sleeps in the park, often with no shoes. Tonight is the first time he has seen me in the collar. He is sitting in a parking lot, staring obsessively at a five-dollar bill. I offer greetings and he does the same. He looks at my collar and grins from ear to ear. “Very nice, very nice.” I ask him what he thinks of my new look.

“I approve, very good!”

Donnie approves of your support for street outreach.
We need you
By Ann Sakaguchi, Deputy Director

What a time we are in.

As I write, restaurants and bars have been closed to diners. By the time you read this, more measures to contain the COVID-19 pandemic will likely be put in place. In the meantime, we are all encouraged to practice social distancing and stay home.

How does that work if you don’t have a home? If you rely on food from meal programs and food banks, how can you do this, in times like these? How does social distancing work for the most vulnerable, our homeless friends?

At Nightwatch, we’re practicing safety. We require hand sanitation as guests come in the door. We are limiting the number of people inside. We’re wiping surfaces daily, including chairs, tables and kitchen surfaces. And, always, we practice safe food handling. We do this for our homeless friends, our volunteers and our staff. Many of our faithful, hardy volunteers have continued to help. But as you read on the front page, we are having to suspend our hot meal program, for the safety of the whole community.

This is where you come in. We don’t know what the future holds but we have hope. Please don’t forget us, as you stay in your homes. We need your prayers now, more than ever. We would like to have “ready to eat” food items available to our clients—sandwiches in bags, whole fruit, lunch-size snacks, wrapped candy.

And of course, your ongoing financial support is critical. We’ve always said that we cannot do this work without you. That is especially true now.

At the beginning of this, public health officials advised us to be prepared to be without 40% of our workforce. I did not know at that time that I would be the first employee out at Nightwatch, I was exposed to someone with COVID-19. I’m not sick, but I am in quarantine at my home for 14 days. I do what I can from home, but I am eager to get back to my faithful, awesome co-workers.

Please pray for us at Nightwatch, for our homeless friends, for the community, for the world.