

“Glow in the dark!”

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Because of COVID 19 I find myself somewhat hindered in my service to both residents and staff these days. Had I established myself prior to our entering this twilight zone it would be a different matter. But here I am, the new kid on the block, an unknown entity, wearing a mask, trying to establish connections; add to this my natural proclivity to shyness, a common stumbling block for far more clergy than you might imagine; then there is my dress code which is business casual and changes daily, rotating weekly and so on, and as this is not a Salvation Army role, the uniform and/or branded ware is out; then there is the fact that all devotional/worship gatherings are on hold – thus I am not able to avail of a method used by my predecessors to get to know folk or become known by them!

In the meantime, weak as they may be, I have been experimenting with some ideas. Examples include: wearing a cross pendant, adding the word CHAPLAIN in bold letters to my name badge, posting pictures of myself with and without a mask on my office door along with a bold sign containing the following invitation next to the door: “Whether we’ve already met or not – when this door is open and you can spare some time feel free to drop in for a chat – welcome!” I’ve also considered purchasing, and wearing daily, a construction worker’s reflective safety vest – possibly generating comments or questions such as:

“Who’s the guy in the hunting vest?”

“Why is that construction worker wandering around in here?”

“Don’t tell me it’s Halloween already!”

“Who is that masked man? You know, the one with the florescent stripes?”

“You look good in neon!”

“I bet he glow in the dark!”

I have done some visiting summarized in the following accounts. I will be using facetious names, actually Bible names – not the actual names of the persons involved. I chatted with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Sarah in their rooms. Then there was Mary, Mary, Martha, the other Mary and Joseph at the lunch table. Rebekah and I had a grand chat while watching the fish dance around in the aquarium and speaking of dancing, Mariam challenged me to swing with her while waiting to be picked up for a medical appointment at the front door. Oh, we mustn’t forget Esther, she shared with me while working away at her favourite pastime, lifting her eyes occasionally to try and figure out who I was. She remembered what I had told her but there was a hint of “Who is this man really?”