

# MESSAGE FROM RABBI ELIZABETH GOLDSTEIN, MISSION & MINISTRY, GU

It is with a mild headache, no big deal at any other time, in any other March, that I sit back to reflect where we are at this moment in the life of our university community. Everything has shifted so fast. First, as a professor, trying to anticipate all that we will need to communicate and teach in an online setting is a tangible challenge. Then as the rabbi of Gonzaga, the Jewish chaplain, the question of how can I be of help to our community is intermingled with the real and true growing sadness and disappointed that there will be no Gonzaga Passover Seder, that we will not be able to continue the incredible momentum of the music we have integrated into Shabbat services. (Thanks Teague Starbuck!) All of that will be on hold until next semester.

The community building that we have come to expect, that comes with celebrating our holy days, is gone for right now. Whether we are isolated in our Lenten journey, preparing for Ramadan and Eid with our families alone, or if we are converts, we do not even have our families with whom to celebrate. And for us Jews, it is unimaginable to close our doors to our neighbors for the sacred Seder meal. How can we fulfill the commandment, "Let all who are hungry come and eat." I take a special pleasure in cooking for many, in hiding the afikoman (symbolic matzah we hide for our kids) and buying small gifts for the children who find it, and for having my friends and their families around me as we celebrate the Spring and deeply acknowledge what it means to be free. This year freedom feels precious in a different way. Freedom is health, safety and the means to survive and thrive.

For Passover, maybe we will do something virtually, but it is impossible to plan that at this moment while we take care of the basic needs of our students: how can we continue to deliver excellent learning in these trying times? Students are very likely living with younger siblings who are out of school and may need to help with child care. Will they have a quiet space to work in? Will they have good internet? How can we help them?

Spiritually, we are all in exile. Praying and celebrating are on hold. Although those who know me know that I am an extrovert, this isolation affects every one of us. We are creatures of community and whether we crave a lot of community or a little bit of community, the recommended restrictions are trying.

What Christianity, Islam and Judaism (and not only these three) share is that we express our religious and spiritual needs most often in the context of an extended family. What does this mean for us now? I encourage us to explore the ways we can take advantage of this aspect of our faith traditions in new ways. I welcome your creative energy and encourage anyone of any faith to offer suggestions. You can write to me at [goldstein@gonzaga.edu](mailto:goldstein@gonzaga.edu). May all who read this feel love and safety, as well as love and protection for those of other faith traditions.

Shalom,  
Rabbi Goldstein

## PASSOVER APRIL 8—16, 2020

