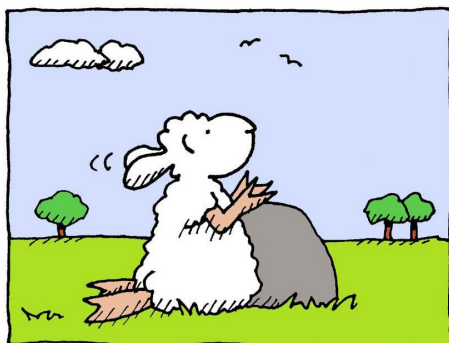




NEW NORMAL?

Re-emerging From the Pandemic with The FLOCK®



The Flock has always been about "a humorous approach to the serious matter of our relationship with God."

Indeed, that relationship has certainly been challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic and the serious matter of enormous human suffering, stress and a sense of hopelessness.

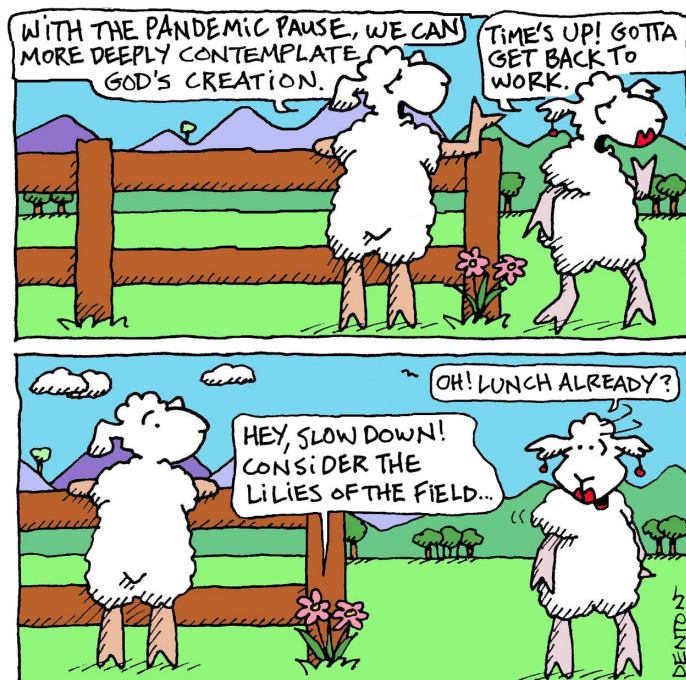
As daily life has been upended, our trust in God and faithfulness in following Jesus' ways have been tested.

But sheepishly, if we may, we remember that Jesus' promise of new life in him—yes, resurrection—is at the core of our belief.

Now, as the world slowly emerges from this dark time, so do Jesus' sheep — so that new life can mean being attentive to what we've learned and committing to live accordingly.



What have we seen and heard from God that points us to new life following Jesus (our savior, remember?) more closely than before. What have we learned of his desires for us?

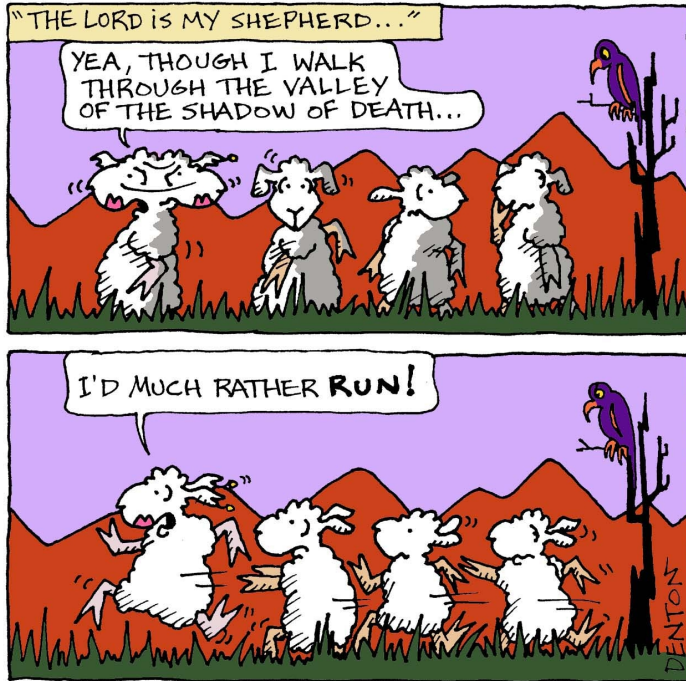


Secular leaders are calling for a "soft re-entry" to normal life — or a "new normal," as they say.

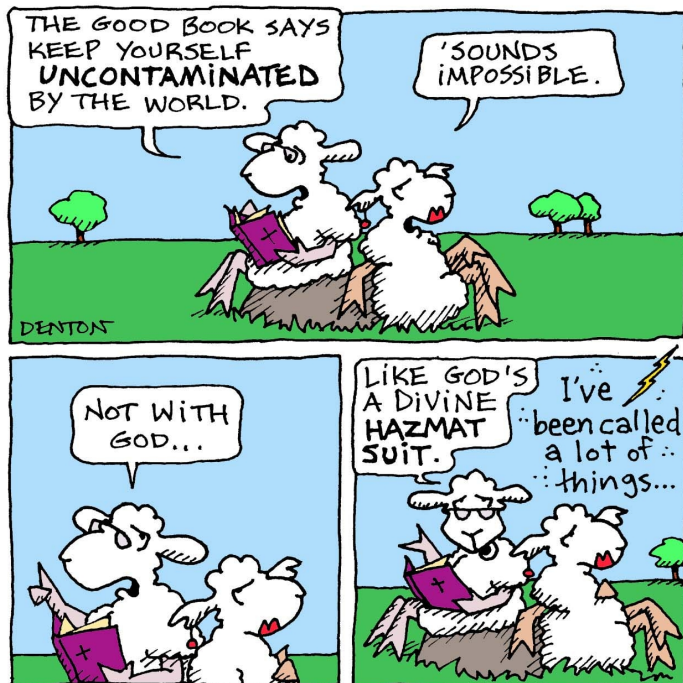
As God's flock we want to make soft re-entry, too.
We don't want to lose our gains.

We can't ignore what we've experienced. Consider
where we've come.

Our early response was that we just wanted it to be
over...now.



In the meantime, God would protect us, right?...



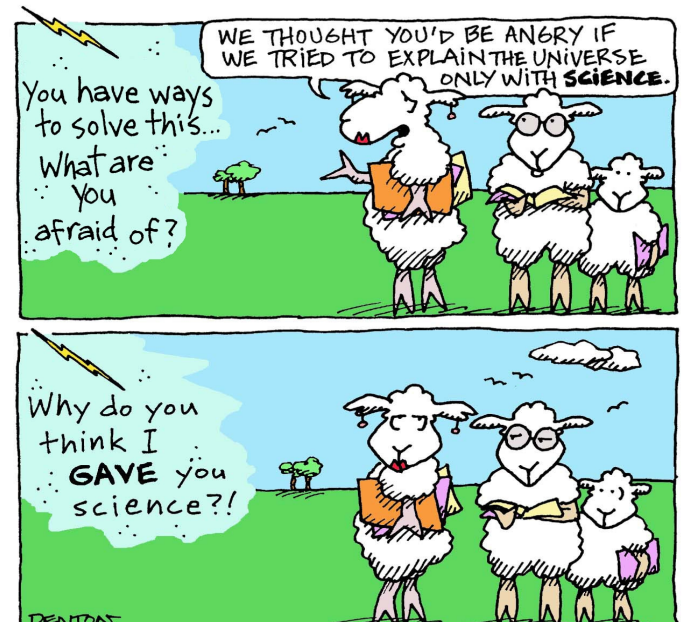
So we prayed hard.

We sent out chain letters urging millions of people
to all pray together at the same time so that the
new coronavirus would suddenly and completely
disappear from the face of the earth and wouldn't
cause us any inconvenience.

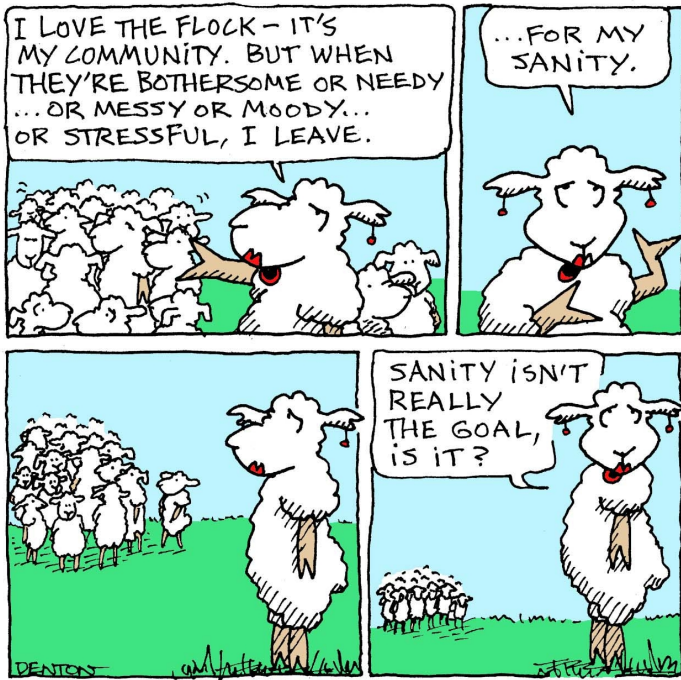


Oh. That didn't quite work.

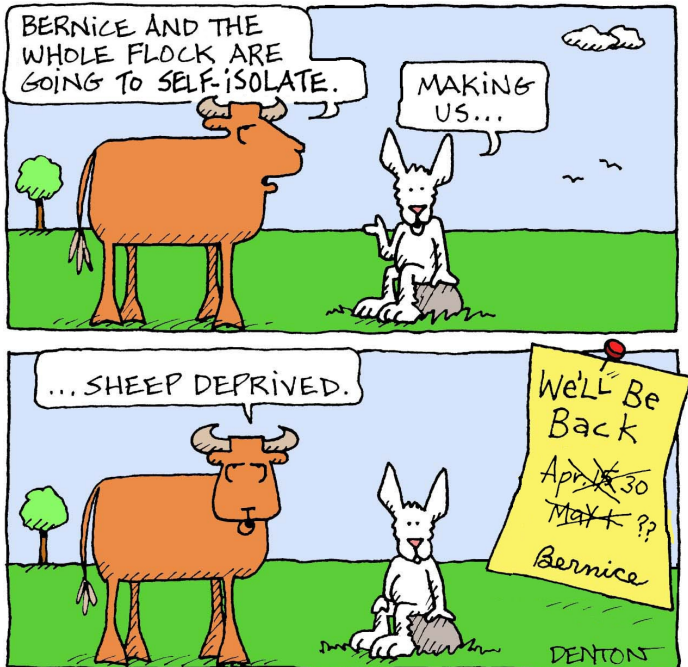
It became clear we would need to face the realities
of life and consider our responsibilities—find the
right ways to take care of each other and God's
creation when it poses difficulties. (Not unlike
dealing with earthquakes, drought, floods, war...)



And sure enough, along came social distancing!
Maybe not such a bad idea. Might even be a bit of a relief to get a break from each other for awhile...



Uhhhh...we missed each other...



Yes, we were pretty much that!

We realized how much we NEEDED each other...



There were a few things we didn't miss...



The comic strip consists of three panels. In the first panel, a sheep is being held by a hand, looking distressed. A church is in the background with a lightning bolt in the sky. The text says "It's okay." In the second panel, the sheep is holding a book and looking down. The text says "You'll be all right—you don't **have** to go every week..." In the third panel, the sheep is standing alone, looking thoughtful. The text says "Bingo!" and "...really—it's **NOT** a sacrament...". The signature "DENTON" is in the bottom right corner.

It's okay.

You'll be all right—you don't **have** to go every week...

Bingo!

...really—it's **NOT** a sacrament...

DENTON

OKAY. NO MORE DISTRACTIONS! NOW I CAN FINALLY PRAY.

Z Z Z Z Z

DENTON

LORD, IF I PRAY INTO MY BOWL, WILL YOU SPEAK TO ME WITH THE LETTERS OF MY ALPHABET SOUP?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

WELL, IT'S OPEN TO INTERPRETATION...

IT MEANS NO

DENTON

A four-panel comic strip featuring two white, fluffy cartoon characters with red bell collars. The first panel shows one character speaking to the other. The second panel shows the same two characters looking downcast. The third panel shows the character speaking again. The fourth panel shows the character holding a bag of 'Pixie Dust'.

I WENT ON A QUEST
TO CHANGE THE WORLD.

WHAT
HAPPENED?

I FOUND BOTH JOY
AND DISAPPOINTMENT.

JOY THAT GOD PROMISED
TO BLESS MY FAITHFUL
EFFORTS.
AND THE
DISAPPOINTMENT?

THE MAGIC
PIXIE DUST
DOESN'T WORK.

DENTON

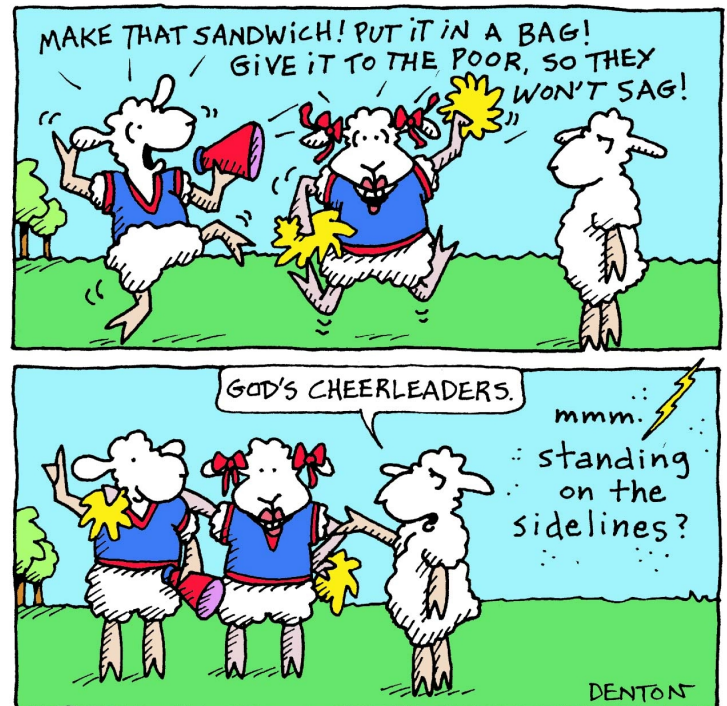
So we were kind of forced on a spiritual journey...



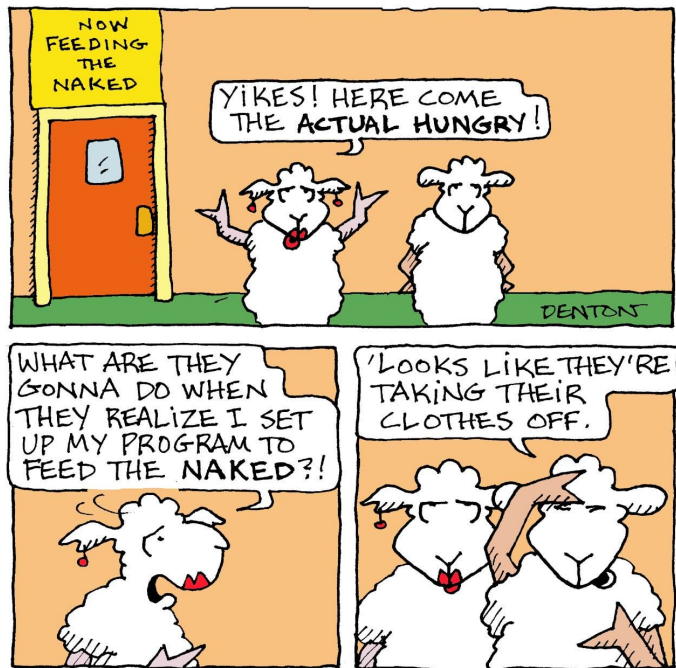
With mixed results.



But we prayerfully searched for ways to respond, to serve with compassion for one another while maintaining our distance in an attempt to be responsible and wise.



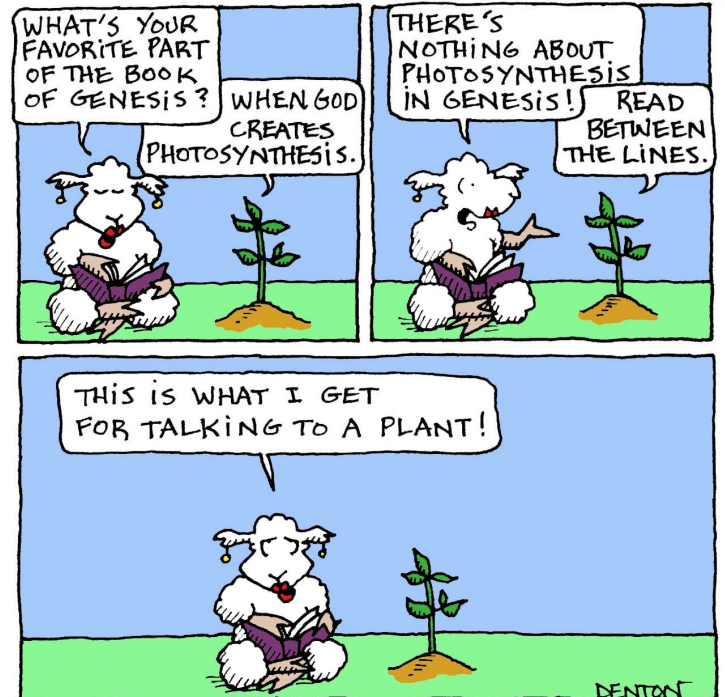
Sheepishly, we didn't always get it right.



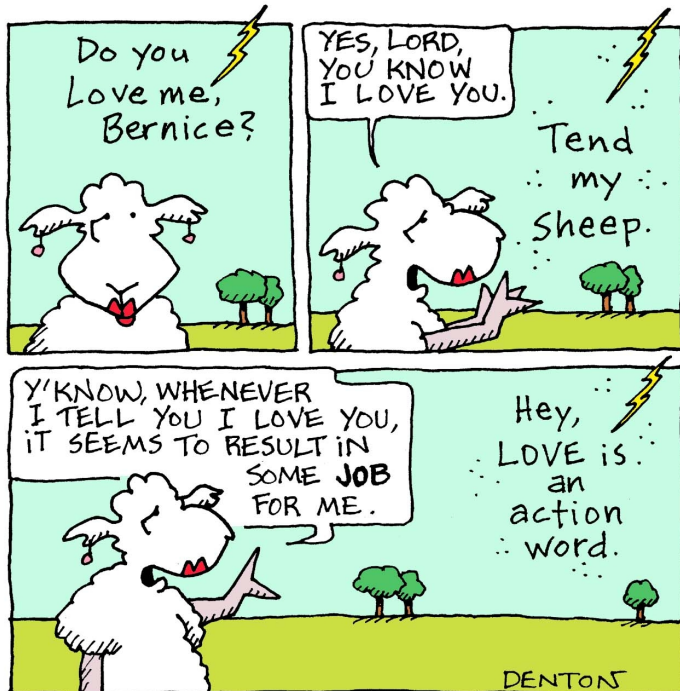
Bringing HOPE was not as easy as we wanted to think.



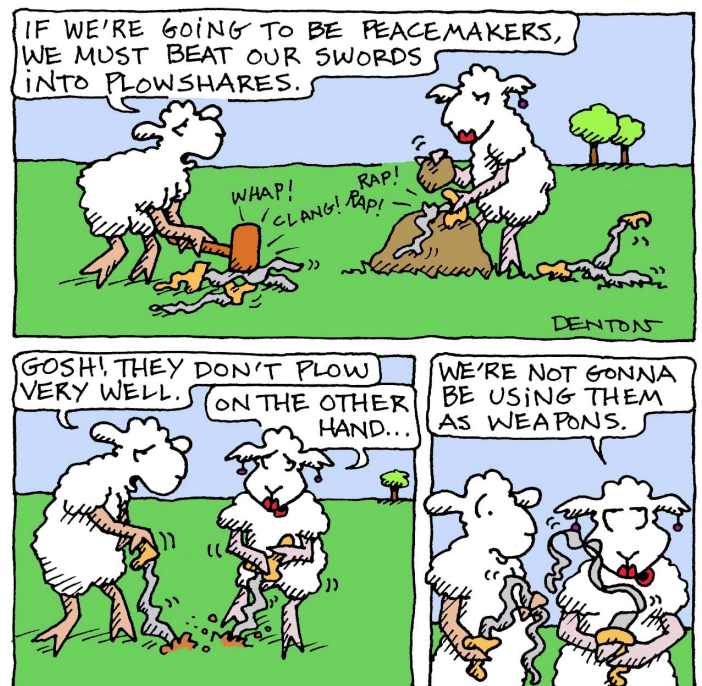
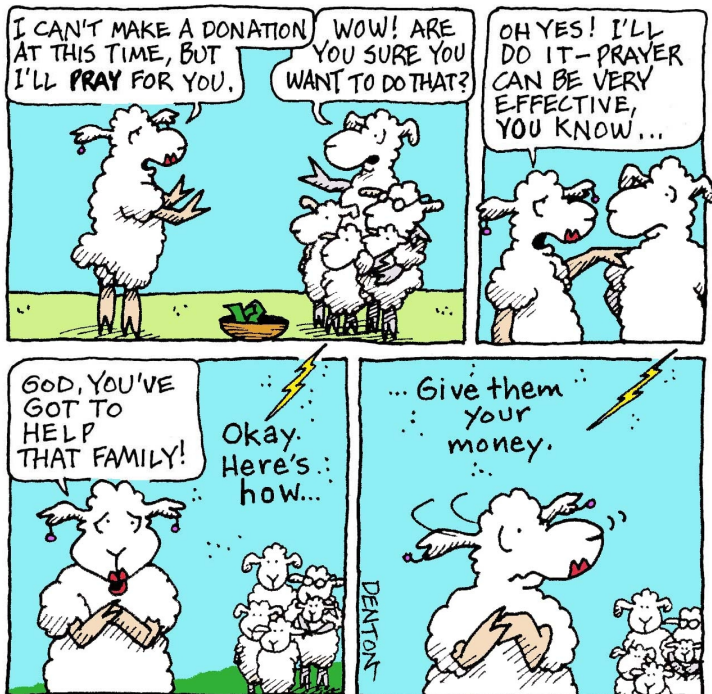
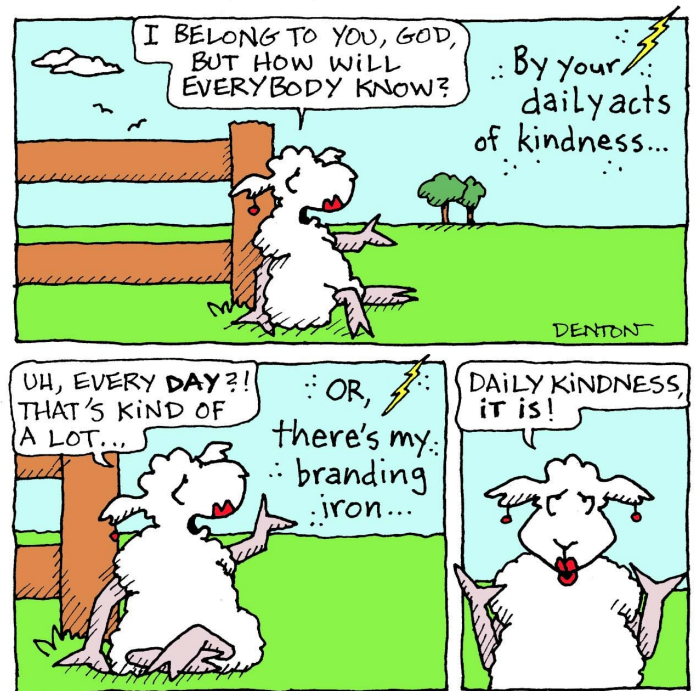
But we finally figured it all out...with some help.

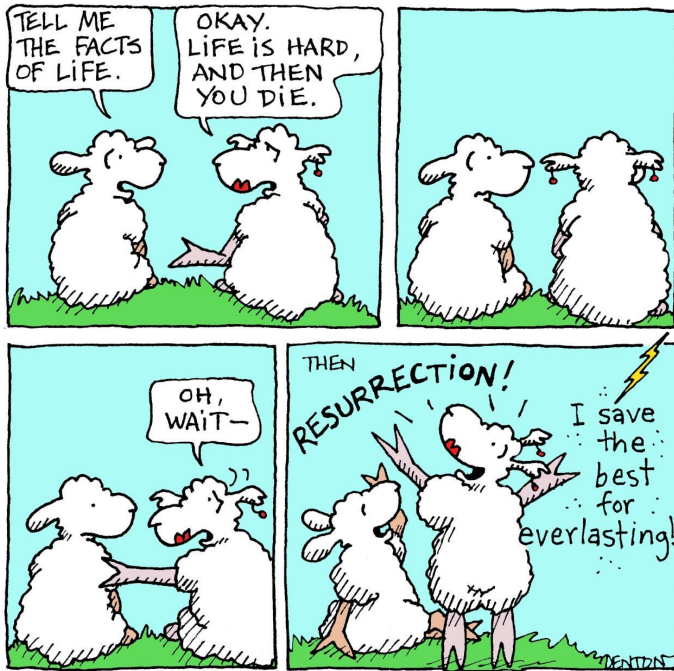


'Turns out, despite the challenges, some things never change...um, like the ways of our Savior.



So here's to a soft re-entry into a kinder, infinitely loving new life after pandemic!





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More Parish Resources from
Jean Denton and the Flock:

<http://pastoral.center/flock>