

## **Life in the Time of Covid, 2020-2022**

Delores Gustafson, 93, Patty Lindell, 92, and Rose Bertelson, 80

The word "Covid" reared its head early for me in 2020. My grandson had been in China with his two pre-school children to celebrate the Chinese New Year with his in-laws near Wuhan. He called at the end of January to tell of their frightening journey to get back to the U.S. before the doors closed to all travel. Back here in Northfield our senior co-op had a grand Super-Bowl party for all fifty-plus residents.

Life within my new home, Kildahl Park Pointe, went on as usual, but the news of this threatening pandemic kept raising the ante. By the second week of March, public gatherings were halted, isolation began, and a new cloistered life faced us. On May 2, I recorded on my calendar: "5370 confirmed cases / 370 deaths in Minnesota."

That's also when Rose, Patty, and I decided to gather after church for brunch in the conference room at Kildahl PP. We had enjoyed going to a light meal after church each Sunday at Brick Oven Bakery. It closed, so we found that our big six-foot-square table afforded the necessary separation while eating and talking. We ordered out and picked up from different establishments. As vaccines appeared, we felt safe using the four-foot round table in my apartment instead. We each listened to the service in our PJs in our own apartments and gathered later in my apartment every Sunday.

It became a sisterly gathering. We'd talk about the service, events in our co-op, our lives before Kildahl, our families, travels, fears, and loves. We'd often be talking for over two hours. Since we could no longer be with our own families, we adopted each other.

If COVID is spoken of as a separator of families, which it was, we found it brought us a closeness that few people of our age ever obtain in a new home. I've gained two sisters, and they will remain my closest friends. As our world slowly reopens, we hope to continue to gather at St. John's as long as we're able. We'll also continue our brunches and talk of many things, solving the troubles of this small world we now inhabit.