



CHRIST CHURCH, DARTMOUTH

An inclusive church welcoming everyone

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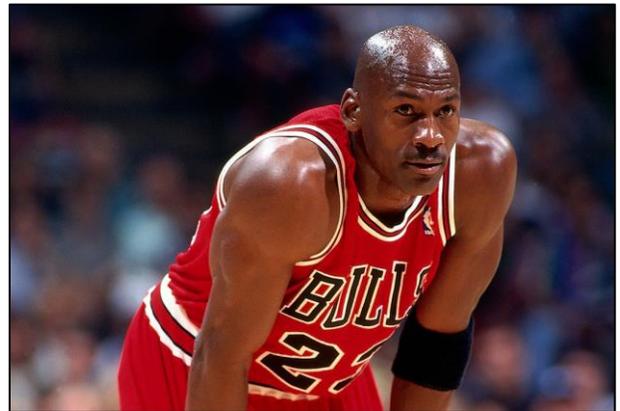
"I've failed over and over and over again in my life and that is why I succeed." -Michael Jordan

"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare[a] and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope." - Jeremiah 29:11

Dear Friends in Christ,

The Lord has Risen! Alleluia!

When I was a young boy in about grade seven, right around this time of year, you would most likely find me in the backyard playing basketball. I love the sport—playing and watching. However, I am short, so I never made any of the school teams. When I was in much better shape as a youth, I spent much of my time playing hockey (3-4 times a week), golf, and softball. But in the backyard, shooting hoops, I always pretended that I was like the great Michael Jordan, making that last three pointer, to win the game! I even was blessed to wear the latest "Air Jordan" Nike sneakers from time to time.



If you follow sports as much as I do, you may know that ESPN and Netflix have released a ten-part documentary about Michael Jordan called "The Last Dance." The series chronicles Jordan's career as a consummate team leader and highlights his strong work ethic as he was able to achieve six championships in the NBA. During the 1986 playoffs, NBA Hall of Famer Larry Bird was quoted as saying about Jordan's performance "I think he's God disguised as Michael Jordan."

In the latest episode, which aired Sunday evening, the viewer is taken on a journey with the basketball great, as he retires from basketball in 1994 to the time, he won his sixth NBA ring in 1998. Some may recall that Jordan's father was murdered in 1993. Michael from the grief associated with this loss, and constant media criticism, decided to retire. During his retirement, Jordan did not just sit around but instead challenged himself to play Major League Baseball for the Chicago White Sox, farm team. A man who loved a challenge continued to excel.

In Jordan's absence, the NBA was not the same. The league experienced a sense of loss as Air Jordan; the best player walked away from the game while he was still able to compete at his

highest level. When Jordan did return, his press release simply read, "I'm Back." Many columnists likened Jordan's return to Jesus Christ's Resurrection with columns titled "Resurrection Michael Jordan's return to the NBA was greeted like the second coming, even if his play was at times ragged." As the rumours of a return continued, Jordan, in his first press conference back, said, "It was a little embarrassing. I'm human like everybody else. Everyone was treating me like a god."

For me, Jordan is the ultimate athlete. A person who was the best at his profession, and a yet and admitted flawed person. He was a man who understood what it took to win, and when coming back from a period of isolation, he wasn't able to do it right away. Instead, it took a year for Jordan to return to form, and then came three championship years.

I wonder if we are in a period where we are wondering, "what will the church be like when we are back?" How are we using this period of isolation to develop who we are? Are we just sitting around, or are we active like Jordan was playing baseball? I believe we are active. Active in our vision of who we are, and who we want to be. We are blessed to have an active parish council that continues to meet and begins our vision of 2020. We have a great team. A great group who seeks to reveal God to the world, each and every day.

I suspect that when we gather again, things will look different. There will be some rust, and we may not do things like we always have. However, as a team, each playing a role, we will get back into championship form. As we often say, as the Body of Christ, we each have gifts to contribute. This is why I love team sports so much. On the field, everyone works together to win, to bring about something special. I think the church could take some pointers from sports and how we can carry the load. Getting to the goal is not always pretty, and it takes time. Knowing that the church has never left, but has transitioned into something different, what will it look like when we can say "we're back."

With Easter blessings, faithfully yours in Christ,



The Rev. Dr. Kyle Wagner
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