

## Dear Members of St. John's Lutheran Church,

Hello and Good Day to you!!

Below are the scripture readings for the Sixth Sunday in Lent, along with a Devotion.

Other Notes:

If you would like to listen to Christian Crusaders Radio Ministry which was founded in 1936 at Trinity Lutheran Church in Waterloo and has resided at Nazareth Lutheran for over 50 years go to: <http://christiancrusaders.org/listen/>

And / or you can listen to it on these two radio stations:

Waterloo KNWS 1090 am at 3:00 p.m. and Waverly KWAY 1470 am at 7:30 a.m.

At the end of this letter is a pamphlet stating how our nation church (ELCA) is at work in the world fighting the COVID-19 Pandemic.

I was asked if St. John's was accepting offerings even though the church is closed. YES! Your gifts are most welcome and needed to continue the ministry of St. John's!!!!

You may mail your offering to the church: St. John's Lutheran 4110 E. Mount Vernon Rd. Waterloo, IA 50703

### **For this Sunday:**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

### **Prayer of the Day**

Almighty God, your Son came into the world to free us all from sin and death. Breathe upon us the power of your Spirit, that we may be raised to new life in Christ and serve you in righteousness all our days, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

### **First Reading: Ezekiel 37:1-14**

*Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones is a promise that Israel as a nation, though dead in exile, will live again in their land through God's life-giving spirit. Three times Israel is assured that through this vision they will know that "I am the LORD."*

<sup>1</sup>The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. <sup>2</sup>He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. <sup>3</sup>He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord GOD, you know." <sup>4</sup>Then he said to me, "Prophesy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. <sup>5</sup>Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. <sup>6</sup>I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD."

<sup>7</sup>So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. <sup>8</sup>I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. <sup>9</sup>Then he said to me, "Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." <sup>10</sup>I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

<sup>11</sup>Then he said to me, "Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.' <sup>12</sup>Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. <sup>13</sup>And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. <sup>14</sup>I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken and will act, says the LORD."

### **Psalm: Psalm 130**

<sup>1</sup>Out of the depths

I cry to you, O LORD;

<sup>2</sup>O LORD, hear my voice!

Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication.

<sup>3</sup>If you were to keep watch over sins,

O LORD, who could stand?  
<sup>4</sup>Yet with you is forgiveness,  
in order that you may be feared.  
<sup>5</sup>I wait for you, O LORD; my soul waits;  
in your word is my hope.  
<sup>6</sup>My soul waits for the Lord more than those who keep watch for the morning,  
more than those who keep watch for the morning.  
<sup>7</sup>O Israel, wait for the LORD, for with the LORD there is steadfast love;  
with the LORD there is plenteous redemption.  
<sup>8</sup>For the LORD shall redeem Israel  
from all their sins.

## **Second Reading: Romans 8:6-11**

*For Paul, Christian spirituality entails living in the reality of the Holy Spirit. The driving force behind our actions and values is not our sinful desire for self-satisfaction but the very Spirit by which God raised Jesus from the dead and will also raise us from the dead.*

<sup>6</sup>To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. <sup>7</sup>For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law—indeed it cannot, <sup>8</sup>and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

<sup>9</sup>But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. <sup>10</sup>But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup>If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

## **Gospel: John 11:1-45**

*Jesus is moved to sorrow when his friend Lazarus falls ill and dies. Then, in a dramatic scene, he calls his friend out of the tomb and restores him to life.*

<sup>1</sup>Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. <sup>2</sup>Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. <sup>3</sup>So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." <sup>4</sup>But when Jesus heard it, he said, "This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." <sup>5</sup>Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, <sup>6</sup>after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

<sup>7</sup>Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." <sup>8</sup>The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?" <sup>9</sup>Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. <sup>10</sup>But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them." <sup>11</sup>After saying this, he told them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him." <sup>12</sup>The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right." <sup>13</sup>Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. <sup>14</sup>Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. <sup>15</sup>For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." <sup>16</sup>Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

<sup>17</sup>When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. <sup>18</sup>Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, <sup>19</sup>and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. <sup>20</sup>When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. <sup>21</sup>Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. <sup>22</sup>But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him." <sup>23</sup>Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." <sup>24</sup>Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." <sup>25</sup>Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, <sup>26</sup>and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" <sup>27</sup>She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world."

<sup>28</sup>When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." <sup>29</sup>And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. <sup>30</sup>Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. <sup>31</sup>The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. <sup>32</sup>When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." <sup>33</sup>When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. <sup>34</sup>He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." <sup>35</sup>Jesus began to weep. <sup>36</sup>So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" <sup>37</sup>But some of them said, "Could not he who

opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

<sup>38</sup>Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. <sup>39</sup>Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days." <sup>40</sup>Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" <sup>41</sup>So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. <sup>42</sup>I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me." <sup>43</sup>When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" <sup>44</sup>The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

### Devotion

Pastor Jeff Blank

Over the years I have tried to teach confirmation classes the song, "Dem Dry Bones - Now hear the Word of the Lord." I haven't had much success but I have been entertaining, or at least that is how I like to remember those moments but the students may describe them differently.

What I like about the story of the dry bones from Ezekiel is the picture it creates in my mind. I picture a valley filled with people feeling hopeless, lost, and disconnected from their homes, family, and God. But Ezekiel is called to tell all those people feeling down and out that something is about to happen that will bring new life back to dem dry, hopeless bones of theirs.

I have a feeling that our days of isolation due to the coronavirus will not be over soon but they will pass. And when they do there will be new life for us. When it is over, we will have become different if not new people because of our experience of isolation. I believe that we will find that interpersonal, interhuman contact is important and truly desired.

I say this because we have already become isolated long before the coronavirus. Our technology has enabled us to stay in touch with people without ever being in the same room, state or country with each other. I like telephones, texting and some the other electronic means of keeping in touch with others. It is easy to visit the grandkids who live in other towns, my siblings who live in their different states, and friends in other countries without having to leave home. Now we can even see each other while we talk. We can even go to church without leaving home. This is all amazing and good stuff, but we may not even be aware of how isolated we already were. But now, that we have to be, or should be isolating ourselves from each other I feel really isolated, almost lonely.

I am hoping that when this is over, we may have a new understanding of how important human contact is. As I watch the videos from Italy where people are standing on their balconies signing to each other it really seems like they are trying to say, "I want to be closer to you. I want to see you face to face." I like to think that this time of isolation will bring us back to a life where people need each other in person. I already look forward to being with you all again. Like the psalmist says, "*My soul waits for the Lord more than those who keep watch for the morning, more than those who keep watch for the morning.*"

"God be with you until we meet again."

#### **Let us pray,**

For all who have lost loved ones and feel alone, for all who are alone and seek and want company and fellowship, for all who are isolated and feel lonely may the Lord our God watch over us all. May the Lord lay the hand of healing upon us and renew us and revive us to a new life in the fellowship of Jesus Christ and with one another. Amen.

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.

The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace.

**Amen.**

Go in peace. Call someone today. **Thanks be to God.**



Lutheran Disaster Response  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
God's work. Our hands.

## SITUATION REPORT

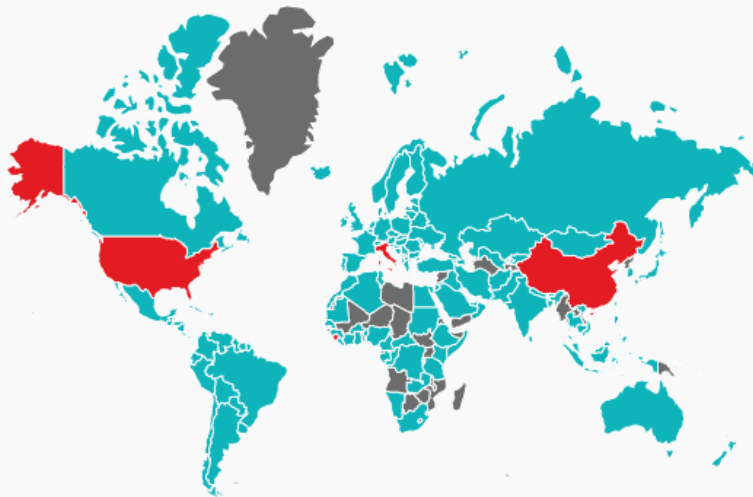
### COVID-19 PANDEMIC



MARCH 20, 2020



WORLDWIDE



#### SITUATION

The COVID-19 outbreak has now been classified as a pandemic by the World Health Organization. As of March 20, over 246,000 people have been infected and over 10,000 people have lost their lives. This number continues to grow daily. Even as many nations are taking drastic measures to prevent escalation, the disease continues to spread.

#### RESPONSE

Lutheran Disaster Response is working with partners around the world to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- In China, the American Baptist Church is procuring medical supplies, such as masks and protective overalls, which are being distributed through Amity Foundation, a local Christian organization.
- In Italy, personal protective equipment, including masks, surgical gowns, and respirators have been contributed to Ospedale Evangelico Betania, a local hospital in Naples.
- In Sierra Leone, the Lutheran church is working with the national government to develop preparedness plans in case of a local outbreak.
- In Palestine, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land is providing support to families whose livelihood has been impacted.
- In the United States, we are supporting our affiliates and synods by providing assistance to vulnerable populations, such as the elderly, in California and other states.
- LDR is partnering with Lutheran World Federation to support frontline staff and prevent the spread of the virus as they continue to work in vulnerable communities.
- LDR is collaborating with ACT Alliance, a global coalition of Protestant and Orthodox churches and church-related organizations, on a global response.