

Dear Sisters and Brothers of New Hope Parish,

These are truly some of the most challenging times many of us have seen, in many years for some and in their lifetimes for others. In less than two months, we have seen this pandemic go from a few known cases in the United States to, as I am writing this letter, more than 15,000 cases. That is nearly half the population of Miami County. Although this is something that we need to take seriously, it is not something that we need fear.

Forgive the relatively simplistic analogy, but it is something like when my daughter crosses Baptiste Drive going to school. She doesn't stand at the corner in fear of crossing the street, nor does she ignore the warning signs; instead, she follows the warning signs and proceeds with caution while paying attention to what's going on around her. Praise God for our health care workers who have spent many years going to school and training to help be God's tools to help keep us healthy. They have told us that this is something we must not ignore and also what to do to help slow and eventually stop the spread of Covid-19.

Regardless of what is going on locally or globally, we can take refuge in the comfort that God is there with each of us and that we will make it through this storm with God's help and guidance. The sessions of New Hope Parish have each decided to remain cautious and heed the warnings that have been given us. Beginning Sunday, March 29 we will no longer be gathering in our church buildings in person; instead, we will gather together in Spirit, in our homes around our computers, or if you'd prefer, DVD players, to participate in worship in a different way. These will be short, intimate services and will be made available each Sunday on the Parish website at [www.nhparish.org](http://www.nhparish.org). If you'd like a DVD copy, contact either the Osawatomie or Paola church offices. Unless something changes and we are told to do otherwise, both Osawatomie and Paola church offices will remain open. Osawatomie's hours will remain Tuesday through Thursday from 9AM – 12noon while Paola will go from 1PM – 3PM Tuesday through Thursday.

Just because we should not meet together in person, doesn't mean we can't still get together in other ways. We'll still have our Fellowship & Outreach Team meeting; it'll just be online. To attend this or any other meetings, go to the church calendar at [www.nhparish.org](http://www.nhparish.org), find the meeting or event, click on it to make it bigger, and then click the link for more details to see a link to the Zoom meeting. And if you have problems, give me a call. It may take a few times, but together, we will make it work.

In addition to the Zoom meetings, we are planning a Zoom Bible Study and I will be setting up a time for a Zoom Fellowship time where we can get together and share what's going on. Even though we need to maintain a physical distance, we must stay close together emotionally and spiritually.

Visitations have always been a challenge, but with the help of the Holy Spirit, our wonderful members of session and some other wonderful Parish family members, we are going to work hard to make sure everyone remains in contact with each other and that any needs, physical or spiritual, are being met. If you'd like to help out, please give me a call or drop me an email.

Again, remember that we serve an awesome God. God will see us through these times. Yes, we may need to make some provisions and may have to step outside our comfort zones, but with God's help, and together, we will see it through. Remember Jesus' words from Luke 12:29-32 "What I'm trying to do here is get you to relax, not be so preoccupied with getting so you can respond to God's giving. People who don't know God and the way he works fuss over these things, but you know both God and how he works. Steep yourself in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. You'll find all your everyday human concerns will be met. Don't be afraid of missing out. You're my dearest friends! The Father wants to give you the very kingdom itself." (MSG)

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me for anything and be sure to stay in touch with each other too. Like the great Gospel song says, "We shall overcome" and overcome we shall.

Blessings and peace,

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