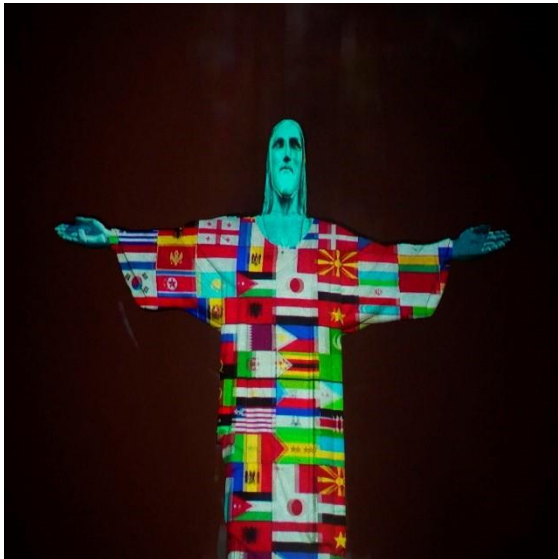


# Covenant News



April 2020

## *Pastor's Spin*



Sisters & brothers in Christ,

Talk about a rather significant difference between newsletters. This stay-at-home order remains in effect throughout the state of Ohio, and in many states across the country. We have already canceled three weekends of worship in March, and the whole month of April seems to be off the table now, too. We seem to be in this never-ending holding pattern of hope beyond hope surrounded by complete and utter chaos.

Please know, our council leaders make all such decisions regarding worship with the health and safety of our members, no: our sisters and brothers in Christ, our dear friends, people we cherish; at the forefront of our minds. We will always err on the side of caution, because we care about your life,

your all-around well-being. As of right now, we will be following the urging of health professionals, state officials and the recommendation of our Bishop, Abraham Allende, to not hold any in-person public worship throughout the month of April. To still somehow celebrate the Resurrection of Our Lord on Easter Sunday, we hope to provide a video recording of worship via YouTube (details will be included how to access the video). We will continue to keep everyone up-to-date through the e-mails we have been sending out on a near-daily basis with bulletins, devotions, Scripture images and prayers. If you have not been receiving these e-mails, and would like to be included, please let myself or Jen know.

Nevertheless, when it comes to that Holy Week, many theological experts contend we, in a sense, live in the Saturday portion of that timeframe. After all, we know Christ has already done so much for us. We know Christ has died for us, and yes, we know the Resurrection has already happened; but now, we wait for that Second Coming. We wait for that Risen Christ to come again, to make all things right: not just in the sense of ending potential viruses, but all physical ailments, all forms of war and hate, all economic inequality, all the selfish behavior; just make it all right, once for all eternity. And so...we wait.

Granted, there's still some incredible great power, the encapsulation of the Good...no, Great News, that comes on that Resurrection of Our Lord day. And when it came to our usual Saturday in between Good Friday and Easter Sunday, we may not have thought too much of it, because we knew it was coming. We knew it was taken care of for us. We knew we would gather up with the usual bigger crowd and all the pomp-and-circumstance of organ blasts. We might have, quite honestly, taken it for granted.

Perhaps, this year, we won't. Even if we cannot worship together side-by-side; the Resurrection of Our Lord is going to give us the extra dose of blessed re-assurance we absolutely need right now. We know this seemingly insurmountable stone of "Stay-at-Home!!!" will not be in place forever. We know this COVID-19 will not end up taking over our life for the rest of our time here on earth or into eternity. We know this, too, shall pass. Granted, we must do our part to make that happen quicker and more effectively (God gives us wisdom, common sense, Holy Spirit, brains, whatever you want to call it; or a combination of all the above and then some) for the benefit of all God's children, who yearn for new life to arrive soon and very soon.

In the meantime, we have this rather eerie connection to those who waited after Jesus was taken off the cross and put away in a tomb, for, what some wondered, may be the end of it all. God had other holy ideas, one of which was that the Resurrection was, by no means, limited to that day outside Jerusalem. It happens every day, even in closed-off homes. It will happen, again, when all of us work together in making personal sacrifices to bring about joy and new life in a way that will be celebrated to the level of all the angel choirs put together. Yes, we wait, for now; but we wait with the most holy eager anticipation of God's Resurrection ministry to be unveiled yet again, for the whole world to enjoy. Amen (so let it be)!

In Christ,  
Pastor Brad

*Photo Caption: "Brazil's Christ the Redeemer statue [Rio de Janeiro] lights up with the flags of countries hit by coronavirus" LonelyPlanet.com*

You are encouraged to continue supporting your Covenant family through your prayers and gifts, including your offerings that you would normally put in the plate on Saturday evenings or Sunday mornings. You may mail them to the church, or contact the office about setting up an automatic withdrawal, or even your bank for checks to be mailed at your discretion. Such offerings are not simply about supporting the ministries of Covenant, but for us to continue to help ministries beyond us, including seminaries and universities, Lutheran Disaster Response and ELCA World Hunger. We thank you for your continued support during this time! Blessings to all of you!





### *April Birthdays*

4/2 James Gradert  
4/5 Bruce Constant  
4/7 Gary Edler  
4/10 Jackie Blogna  
4/10 Ted Lockmiller  
4/20 Tom SusaneK  
4/22 Annie Copeland  
4/23 Dudley Chapman  
4/25 Jaqui Knerem  
4/27 Charlotte Zaranka

4/9 Deb & Chuck Dickey  
Happy 32<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary

4/15 Sheila & Harry Werner  
Happy 42<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary

4/15 Toni & Robert Ridgell  
Happy 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary



And, as we are asked to stay on the home-front for the health and safety of our surrounding community and beyond, we are still invited to be outdoors. May we, always, be thankful for the most beautiful Creation that surrounds us and remember our call to care for it, that numerous generations after us may be able to enjoy it as well!



Regardless of whether we are physically together or not on Easter Sunday, all of your Covenant family, wish you and yours a happiest celebration of the Resurrection of our Lord! No matter the circumstance, Christ is still Risen for you! Share the Great News wherever you are!

Annual Plant Sale update.

Arlene Lasher is hoping to still have the plant sale. Info on order forms will forth coming.





# Northeastern Ohio Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

March 30, 2020

*Lord, you have been our dwelling-place  
in all generations.  
Before the mountains were brought forth,  
or ever you had formed the earth and the world,  
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.*

[Psalm 90:1-2 NRSV]

Dear siblings in Christ of the Northeastern Ohio Synod,

Grace to you and peace in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ!

The COVID-19 pandemic has unsettled our normal way of life since the beginning of March. We find ourselves in a state of anxiety, not knowing what the future holds, relying primarily on the guidance of the medical experts.

In my previous letter, I requested the suspension of all public worship and other in-person gatherings and meetings until at least April 1. However, the escalating number of confirmed cases give clear indication that the danger has not yet reached its peak. Therefore, **I now encourage ministers and congregational leaders to extend that suspension for another month, through the end of April.** This is one of the chief precautions we can take as a way of caring for each other and to deter the spread of the virus.

Last week, Governor Mike DeWine signed a bill (House Bill 197) allowing, among other things, for remote meetings. Thus, for now, every possible meeting should be arranged by whatever electronic means available. It does pose somewhat of a challenge, but it becomes easier to arrange the more it is done.

This news is no doubt disappointing to all who were enthusiastically looking forward to Holy Week and Easter worship and activities. It may be of some consolation to note that Easter is a season of seven weeks, not just one day. The Resurrection can be

celebrated at a later date, and the delay may provide for an even more festive occasion. God is still with us, in times of separation as well as celebration.

I am grateful for the many ways our pastors, deacons, musicians, and those with the gifts of technology have risen to the occasion to care for the people of God whom they're called to serve. Again, it is a challenge, but it does become easier as time goes on.

Our Northeastern Ohio Synod website has a [resource page](#) for those who may not have the capability to offer electronic services.

Of course, caring for God's people extends beyond the Sunday service. And this involves everyone, not just the ordained. This time offers us an ideal opportunity to build on the gifts that each of us was given, as St. Paul says, "to equip the saints for the work of ministry." Each one of us can make phone calls to other members, write notes, and perhaps even offer more tangible assistance - such as picking up groceries, supplies or prescriptions. We are all in this together, to use a well-worn cliché.

On another matter, last Friday, our ELCA Presiding Bishop, the Rev. Elizabeth Eaton, announced [a series of grants](#) designed to provide support for our most vulnerable congregations and ministries. I encourage you to visit the [ELCA website](#) for more information. We will announce other, more local grant opportunities in the weekly e-news. If you have not already subscribed, now is an excellent time, as it is a good source of late-breaking information.

Third, I wish to call your attention to the following scheduling items:

1. The Renewal of Vows service, normally held Tuesday in Holy Week, has been canceled. That is one huge personal disappointment for me, as it would have been my final one as bishop. Should any of you be in need of oil, there are still vials available at the Lutheran Center (Synod Office) in the lobby which you may pick up Monday through Thursday, between 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. We will replenish the supply as needed.
2. The Conference Gatherings to lift up names for potential bishop candidates has been changed to a mail-only process. See the Synod E-news for more details.
3. Synod Council will still meet on April 25, most likely in an electronic meeting. We will most likely have an announcement regarding Synod Assembly following that meeting. As of now, the assembly is still scheduled for June 12-13.

Finally, Psalm 90 at the top of this letter is a reminder to us that our human existence is limited in comparison to the timelessness of God. Pandemics and the resulting fear and isolation, are as old as humanity. Yet throughout the ages, God has been faithful. God has promised to be with us through the ups and downs of life. That is the source of our strength and the source of our hope in this time of insecurity. Let us hold fast to God's promises.

Peace and blessings,



+Bishop Abraham D. Allende

1890 Bailey Road

Cuyahoga Falls, OH 44221

web site: [www.neos-elca.org](http://www.neos-elca.org)

330-929-9022

FAX: 330-929-9018

e-mail: [office@neos-elca.org](mailto:office@neos-elca.org)

Northeastern Ohio Synod, 1890 Bailey Road, Cuyahoga Falls, OH 44221

## ***President of our Congregation Ted Lockmiller***

***“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.”***

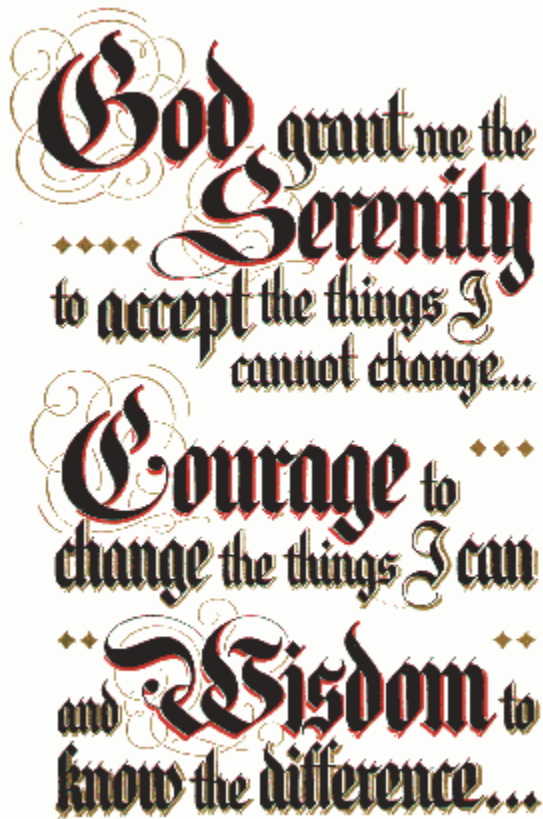
- Charles Dickens - A quote from *A Tale of Two Cities*

The opening lines of this classic novel come immediately to mind when I think of the series of events that have taken place in the past few weeks as the virus began to invade the United States. Without a doubt, other than those that were alive during WWII, the actions taken by our government to combat this virus have to make this the most notable event in our lifetimes. Some, even now, still feel that this is a hoax of some kind. Brought about by politics and the media's obvious desire to focus on the worst possible outcome. The egregious demonstrations by various media members and politicians are likely to have Walter Cronkite spinning in his grave. Personally, I continue to pine for the return of a news anchor who will give a fair accounting of all sides of a story; then will allow me to reach a decision by myself. But that being said, I still believe most of what I hear from our governor and president at their daily press conferences, and I have willingly adjusted my life to meet their expectations or mandates.

But I would have to say that I probably have a different perspective on the current situation when compared with most other folks. In this season of darkness that has been brought on by the coronavirus, I am experiencing a season of light. While some may be hunkered down in an extended winter of despair, I am witnessing a spring of hope. It all comes down to focusing my daily efforts on things I have some control over and not dwelling on those morbid statistics that our government officials throw out at us. Yes, I have taken all the necessary precautions required from each of us by social distancing ourselves from each other. But as I sat in my house, by myself, with nowhere to go, and nowhere that I needed to be, it occurred to me that I was being presented with the golden opportunity that I had been waiting for, one my house had been patiently waiting for, and that now was the time to address those things on the “I will get to that later” list.

By the grace of God, I do not have anyone ill with the virus that is either a family member or a close friend. I do have a colleague whose uncle is currently on a ventilator at Hillcrest Hospital. But that would be the

only person that I have met in my life that currently has the virus. Again, I am not condoning any kind of reckless behavior by anyone. But it comes down to a having the mindset presented to us in the Serenity Prayer.



My grandma used to say, "When life gives you lemons, you make lemonade." With that mantra in mind, I have taken this potentially terrible situation and turned it into an opportunity to improve my life. In many ways, I feel the best I have felt in quite a while. Zero stress, no alarms to wake up to, no meetings to get to, no one expecting anything from me (other than to stay home). In many ways, this feels like a dry run at retirement ... and I think I could certainly get used to this !!! All I would need to add is just the occasional trip to a place with white sand, blue-green water, a cold drink, and some shade. But for now, home sweet home will do just fine (for at least another 30 days). I hope the rest of you have found something worth doing in this time of crisis that takes your mind off the issue of the day. As we have heard many times, this too shall pass, and we will celebrate as one church family once again. Definitely looking forward to that day ... but now I will have a clean, clutter free house too !!! Hallelujah !!!

## Covenant News

The Lutheran Church of the Covenant  
19000 Libby Road, Maple Heights, Ohio 44137

