

Dear Church Family,

I wanted to send out a short message to as many people as possible seeing that for the next few weeks our regular church services will be suspended. I want you to know that while our building on Union St. will be unoccupied, the Leominster Church is still alive and well and functioning in a new and dynamic way. We tend to think of “Church” as a place. We associate “Church” with a time (the 11:00 o’clock hour) but this is far from what the church is or was ever meant to be. In the early days of Christianity, when it was illegal to be a professed follower of Jesus, there were no dedicated Church buildings where people assembled. But somehow, God’s great movement of destiny, of which we, in the end of time are a part of, still went on and today still goes on, in a form different than anyone of us has ever seen or could have ever imagined. But here we are.

Last evening, Ricky, Joanna, Ralph, Gary, Todd, Kathy and I met (sitting 10 feet apart!) to go over the church directory and each took to ourselves a little “flock” to call and to check in on in the coming days. We don’t want anyone to feel alone or forsaken. We want to be able to put our finger on those who are in need, physically, mentally and spiritually. This is an opportunity for each of us to learn how to “love one another” (John 13:35) in new and creative ways as we are now spending more time at home. I loved the posting our friend Keith Dowling put on Facebook. He showed an architectural floorplan of his house with the caption, “Planning a weekend getaway and mapping out my route!”

With the Sabbath coming, I trust as many of you as possible will be taking advantage of various worship services that will be online. I know that John Bradshaw and It Is Written have one prepared. If you hear of other good and inspiring media, let’s put it on the church website or give it to Heather so she can pass the word along. This is a wonderful opportunity to grow in our relationship with Jesus, to strengthen the family bonds as well as our immune systems. Fresh air, pure water, simple, sugar free food...these and many more basic things have been given to us by our loving God to resist and remedy sickness. With more time together, family worship and prayer can hopefully find a greater place. So many good things can come out of seemingly difficult and impossible situations. As a matter of fact, let me close with one that just came to me.

Near the end of the Civil war, General Sherman's troops from the north had overrun much of the state of Georgia, looting most of the food as they went through, including animal grain. Of course back then there was no FEMA or Red Cross or ADRA. It seemed that food shortages were inevitable until the Southerner's found that the Northern army had disregarded the fields and silos that were filled with black-eyed peas. At the time it was largely considered this was only food for animals or slaves. Robert E. Lee referred to the black-eyed pea as "the only unfailing friend the Confederacy ever had."

My brothers and sisters in Christ, Lee called the black-eyed pea an unfailing friend because it remained during the tough times, when pain, fear and loss engulfed the South. Today, when fear and loss threaten our little worlds, let us hold fast to the promises of God. May we take comfort in the words of our Savior who has pledged His steadfast love and His undying support. You are not alone. He will hold us fast. The Unfailing Friend we have in Jesus will remain and strengthen us through our darkest days.

While visitation will be limited at this time, I or someone else will do our best to stay in touch. If you need something we can supply, let us know. God can find a way when others cannot. Never forget, "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, says the Lord that has mercy on thee." Isaiah 54:10

Your friend in Jesus, Pastor Mark and Pam