Message from Pastor J.T.

November 11, 2026

Hello friends.

"The report of my death was an exaggeration" - Mark Twain, June 2, 1897 (often misquoted as, "Rumors of my death have been greatly exaggerated.")
The humorist and author of many classic American novels actually said this in response to reports that he had passed away, when in reality it was Twain's cousin that was gravely ill.

He was also the victim of a second premature obituary in 1907 when people lost track of a yacht he was traveling on. After the New York Times published a story about the vessel being likely lost at sea, it was revealed that the ship had been held up in its journey by fog, and Twain had actually disembarked.

Sometimes things that have supposedly died several times are actually still very much alive.

In the comics I love to read so much, hardly anybody ever stays dead. Did any of you watch the series finale of Marvel's *VisionQuest* show just last night? No spoilers here! Stay after the credits!

Did you hear about the time DC Comics decided to let the audience decide if a character would stay dead or not? In 1988, the character of Robin in the Batman books was not very popular with readers. This was the second character to suit up as Robin, after the original Dick Grayson aged out of the role. The kid, Jason Todd, was a divisive character to fans because of his rebellious attitude (Batman originally found him in Crime Alley trying to boost the hubcaps off of the Batmobile), and also because they missed the original. So, they had the Joker lure him into a warehouse, beat him with a crowbar, and then leave him there while a bomb went off. DC Comics decided to let people vote about whether Robin would live or die. They set up two 1-900 phone numbers. Fans could call one if they wanted him to live, and the other if they wanted him to die. Very democratic. Readers voted for Robin to die by a slim margin of just 72 votes (5,343 to die, 5,271 to live). Except - even the most decisive democratic process can have a shelf-life. I 2005, Jason Todd turned up alive as the lethal vigilante Red Hood - with an explanation that is way too complicated and boring for even most devoted comic readers. If you can believe it, he's still around to this day, and still an associate of Batman and the half-a-dozen other Robins that have arisen since. But - and this is important - he is NOT the same.

Sometimes things that are democratically declared dead can still be resurrected into something similar... but not quite.

Premature obituaries are a problem. They are also sometimes hilarious.
When Ludwig Nobel passed away in 1888, several newspapers mistakenly published the obituaries they had prepared for his brother Alfred. Alfred Nobel was a brilliant chemist, and the inventor of powerful controlled explosives - including dynamite - for use in mining, demolition, and construction. Unfortunately, those who found it most useful were those who used it in warfare. Although he neither supported nor condemned this use publicly, his premature obituary read, "The merchant of death is dead." It accused him of amassing his great wealth from the deaths of countless other people. Because he wasn't actually dead, and was

able to read this in the newspapers, he was devastated. He devoted a considerable amount of his wealth and the bulk of his estate to establish the Nobel Prize in 1895. He actually did die a year later.

Sometimes a thing that is declared dead can - with sufficient self-examination and introspection - become something that inspires greatness in subsequent generations.

Well, despite what you may have heard (or decided on your own), Covenant Lutheran Church is not dead. No decisions have been made on *any* long-term plans. In fact - we are very much alive. In the coming months we will celebrate Advent and Christmas together. We have two Christmas Eve Services planned, just like last year and the year before. We will celebrate Epiphany for only a few short weeks before Ash Wednesday arrives early - on February 10, 2027. And we will celebrate the 40 days of Lent, Holy Week, and Easter together as a congregation. We will continue to flood MESA Outreach with non-perishable food items for our neighbors. We will once again bring Christmas joy to the children in our community through our Angel Tree project with Schmalz Elementary. We will confess, and commune. We will baptize and bury. We will have potluck and bible study and brilliant sermons every week. We will always be singing.

I hope you'll be there with me.

Pastor J.T.