



Empty Churches on Easter Sunday April 14, 2020

Dear FBC,

Scott Nunn, a Reporter for the Wilmington Star News, asked several people in our region to assist him as he prepared to write an article for the newspaper that appeared in last Sunday's edition. Our Tannis Nelson submitted a meditation that Scott chose to use. She articulated her faith, the mission of First Baptist Church and the hope of resurrection very well. Thank you, Tannis! Scott asked that we answer the following question: Our churches will be empty on Easter Sunday. Can we somehow transform that reality into a story of resurrection and transformation? I sent him the following:

First Baptist Church is a people that worship together, serve our community and world together, celebrate our unity together, deepen our relationship with Christ and each other together and share the Good News that Jesus is the Savior of the world that loves all people, extends the grace of forgiveness to all people, and empowers all people to become the children of God. We gather as a church at times, but more often, we are a scattered church that believes "love does," and we embody that mission. In doing so, we serve our Savior by loving our neighbors as we love ourselves in an attempt to be conduit of God's love that transforms lives and offers the hope of resurrection when it looks like all is lost. When I am asked, "Where is First Baptist Church?" My response is always the same. "First Baptist Church is all around you. We gather in a building at the corner of Market Street and Fifth Avenue to worship as a congregation, and in a building at the corner Independence Boulevard and Canterbury Road for meetings, and activities, and fellowship as a congregation, but First Baptist Church of Wilmington is downtown and in midtown, in Ogden and in Brunswick County, in Pender County and on Pleasure Island. First Baptist Church is a people that is united under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and believes that each one of us are called and commissioned by our resurrected Savior to share the love, grace and hope of Jesus in the neighborhoods where we live, places where we work and go to school and play, and to people that need to be set free from things that prevent them from being all that God created them to be. First Baptist Church is a people with a purpose, empowered by God to live out the Good News that Jesus taught and lived whether we are gathered to worship or scattered to serve. Yes, we are disappointed that we cannot come together on Easter Sunday to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, but our disappointment pales in comparison to what unites us as followers of Jesus. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! The ways we celebrate that fact is living proof every single day.

Scott chose not to print what I sent him, and that is not a problem. The good news is that God chooses to use that which we offer to God to further God's Kingdom every day, especially on the hard days. What a blessing it is to help equip you "to become and help others become fully devoted followers of Jesus," and to hear, see, and be inspired by the many ways we do it, together.

You are loved!

Jim Everette, Chief of Staff