



# St. Paul's Episcopal Church

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Easter 2020

Greetings to the saints of St. Paul's,

Alleluia, Christ is Risen! The Lord is Risen Indeed, Alleluia! This has been the joyous Easter message of the Church since her inception. Many things change, but the Gospel does not. We serve the Risen King who spoke the world into existence, became incarnate for our benefit, and through His death and resurrection gives us a life in relationship with God. Nothing can take that away, as St. Paul asserted in Romans 8:38-39.

This Lenten season has been unique. We often scratch our heads as to 'what we'll give up for Lent,' and this year we gave up more than usual (whether we liked it or not). In general, there's been a bifurcation in how people experience this time. Some find that they have more time than they'd like, and wander around looking for something to do. One friend (a retired Army colonel) put a note inside her refrigerator that said, 'close the \*&\$ door, you're not hungry, you're bored.' Others are working overtime, and even returning to work. Another friend, a retired Navy nurse, has returned to help at an overloaded hospital. When he comes home, he sleeps outside in their dog kennel so that he doesn't risk infecting his family. Many of us who continue to work have learned new skill sets (e.g. Zoom, Facebook Live, YouTube) in order to stay connected with each other. If you're not subscribed to the E-pistle, please do! It's been the primary way we're communicating parish happenings between Sunday services. To sign up, please contact Georgianna Harrison at [gellord@hotmail.com](mailto:gellord@hotmail.com) or (903) 268-0534.

This will culminate into the strangest Easter I've ever experienced. We'll rejoice in the spiritual unity Jesus has given us first with God, and secondly with each other. Christianity speaks loudly to the physical element of a life with God (i.e. Incarnational theology), and yet that's something most of us will miss on Easter. Only 10 people (or less) will receive the consecrated bread, and only the Celebrant will receive the wine. None of us will touch each other at the Peace, but instead offer a wave or bow. As we move through this, we all seek balance, though much is out of balance, and most of us (even introverts like me) look forward to returning to normal worship.

On Passion Sunday, I cited a quote from Henri Nouwen, and for Easter, I offer another one. "Being patient is difficult. It is not just waiting until something happens over which we have no control: the arrival of the bus, the end of the rain, the return of a friend, the resolution of a conflict. Patience is not waiting passively until someone else does something. Patience asks us to live the moment to the fullest, to be completely present to the moment, to taste the here and now, to be where we are. When we are impatient, we try to get away from where we are. We behave

as if the real thing will happen tomorrow, later, and somewhere else. Be patient and trust that the treasure you are looking for is hidden in the ground on which you stand.”<sup>1</sup>

Where is this hidden treasure? Since we’re having different experiences in this time, I can’t offer a singular precise answer. Yet I can say that this time calls us to wake to the groans and movements of creation. What happened a half a world away impacted the way we live in rural/suburban Greenville, and the whole world. We have been forced to consider that we are more connected to others than many have thought. In February, we might have taken care of our ‘to do’ list at Walmart without considering the vast logistical systems and supply chains involved with reliably putting goods on the shelves. It functioned reliably and invisibly. A friend of mine, who grew up in Africa, recently wrote, “Management courses teach how to control variability and de-risk. The result is that many of us, relative to Africa, are also unpracticed at difficulty.” There’s a gift that we have awakened to the fragility of our societal systems, and that we have trusted in them without realizing how much we trusted in them. That has resulted in a level of panic that manifests in odd and childish ways (e.g. hoarding toilet paper, and increased irritability over non-issues). Therefore, we can call upon the Holy Spirit to guide us to retool our minds and hearts to center on Who can be trusted: God Alone. As the old hymn says, “On Christ the solid Rock, I stand; All other ground is sinking sand.” This is new life, a resurrected life, a life informed and lived in the light of Easter! It’s a message of hope in a world that desperately needs hope. Our temporary crisis helps us to center on the treasure of the Gospel of Jesus, who has broken the bonds of fear and death, and is the One who we worship with our lives. That’s Good News worth sharing!

While we have not been meeting physically, I’ve been giving a weekly Rector’s Update via the E-pistle. It seems appropriate to add these announcements to this Easter letter.

- The churches in Greenville will have a 72-hour Citywide Prayer Vigil on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, April 14, 15, and 16 to unite in prayer in response to the current crisis. Hopefully by the time this letter arrives, those willing to pray will be able to select a twenty-minute period to pray via the *For The City* website (i.e. [www.ForTheCity.info](http://www.ForTheCity.info)).
- Our Sunday video services improve each week, and we even did a prerecorded insertion of the Passion Narrative last week. A big thank you to our tech team (i.e. The Faunce family, Laura Funk, and Mark Walsh)! We’ll continue to offer the service via Facebook and YouTube as live streaming (with recordings and an MP3 of the sermon posted on our website later). There’s some talk about continuing to broadcast after we return to normal worship.
- Bishop Sumner sent the clergy in the Diocese his expectation that “we will remain in the present mode of remote worship, meetings, and pastoral care throughout April and well into May.” It’s this Rector’s hope and expectation that we be back in the church building for a blow-out service on Pentecost (i.e. May 31<sup>st</sup>).
- Our parish office has closed, and we are working from home. The Bishop (and Hunt County) have asked that our parish office close until at least April 17<sup>th</sup>. I expect this will be extended through the end of the month, at least. We are checking parish voicemails remotely, responding to emails, and meetings are done via conference calls and videoconferencing.
- If you need to get with me for a meeting, I’m available to schedule one for a phone or video call. The best email is [fathernickfunk@gmail.com](mailto:fathernickfunk@gmail.com).

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<sup>1</sup> Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Bread for the Journey: A Daybook of Wisdom and Faith* (Zondervan, 2006), 5.

- Pastoral Care is being done via phone and videoconferencing. Face-to-face pastoral calls are only done in dire situations, and by the Rector only. Through the Match Maker's Ministry, I have a list of people who can help with emergency repairs, shopping, other tasks. If you have needs (or want to be a helper on the Match Maker's list), please email or call – we can help!
- Zoom videoconferencing has been the major provider for videoconferencing in the Diocese, and St. Paul's is using it regularly. The St. Paul's Zoom Meeting may be found at <https://zoom.us/j/9037772020> and our Meeting ID is: 903 777 2020, and the password is 777777. That's the same meeting information as I use for all my scheduled meetings.
- We are offering Noonday Prayer on Wednesdays at noon (via Zoom and Facebook), the 'Bible and Breakfast' Bible Study at 8:00 on Friday morning (though NOT on Good Friday), and the Sunday Coffee Hour after service via a Zoom meeting.
- St. Paul's Episcopal School has reopened for the children of Essential Personnel. We expect to have about 20 students next week (as with this week), compared with our normal enrollment of over 80. To keep people employed, and not deplete all our funds, we've applied for forgivable loans through the CARE Act. Thank you, Jennifer Faunce, for doing this.
- St. Paul's Episcopal Church continues to have roughly the same overhead costs as we did prior to our current crisis, and the funds we've received have been down significantly. As a result, the parish has applied for forgivable loans through the CARE Act as well. Thank you, Bill Rolston, for doing this.
- Our Jr. Warden and Stewardship Chair, Frank McKee, has been working toward installing a credit card terminal to receive donations, and is determining the process for the parish to receive automatic recurring donations through our local bank.

I'm looking forward to seeing each of you in person very soon. As you might imagine, Cosette is missing seeing everybody at Coffee Hour too. I pray the blessing of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit will be with you this Easter and always. Alleluia, Christ is Risen! The Lord is Risen Indeed, Alleluia!

Yours in Christ,

*Fr. Nick*

The Rev. Dr. Nicholas J. Funk  
Rector – St. Paul's Episcopal Church