

## **Grace and Peace to you this bright Saturday my dear sisters and brothers in Christ!**

Who would have ever thought that it will come to this point where Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday services will be conducted via Live Streaming?

Easter is the peak on the Christian calendar and the time when after observing lent for forty days, we physically gather together to celebrate the Resurrection story. It is also the time when we await the triumphant entry of the Lord into the city of Jerusalem to face the cross.

We are very aware that we live in troubled times and that we can expect any uncertainties. These troubled times have transformed us and the way we do ministry. For so many of us, we still cannot comprehend the situation. In this time of pandemic and “lockdown,” we are all dealing with new realities that we have never experienced before.

As we isolate ourselves for safety reasons, there are high possibilities that we could isolate ourselves mentally, emotionally and even spiritually. In self-quarantine, we shouldn't forget the fact that we need to stay safe and obey common hygiene rules. We should continually wash our hands, use sanitizers frequently and we should stay home if there is no need for us to venture out.

If there is any need for us to leave our home and go outside, we should NOT forget to take all precautions. Life is precious! Life is a gift from God that should be cherished and lived to the fullest. We should not allow worldly distractions to sway us away from our faith.

In our self-quarantine, we need to continue to reach out to our church family and even to strangers. Check on one another. Pray for one another. Let your church family know that you care.

Let us continue to care for the weak and the needy as the scripture permits us to do. In the book of Psalm, we are encouraged to do just that:

*"Blessed are those who have regard for the weak;  
the Lord delivers them in times of trouble.  
The Lord protects and preserves them -  
they are counted among the blessed in the land -  
he does not give them over to the desire of their foes.  
The Lord sustains them on their sickbed  
and restores them from their bed of illness."  
(Psalm 41:1-3)*

This psalm, like many others, guides us to focus and care for the weak and the vulnerable. As we care for others, we need to be aware that even in these dark days, God will deliver us in times of trouble. God will protect, sustain and preserve us.

As we prepare to worship this Palm Sunday, it will be difficult to not pay attention to somethings that sustain us as Christians. One of those graces is holy Communion. Bishop Park and the cabinet have made it known to us that in special situations like this, the gift of God through virtual Holy Communion is permissible and in place. In this spirit, during our live streaming Palm Sunday worship service which happens to be the first Sunday in the month, I will consecrate and virtually share holy communion with you. I encourage you to prepare your own table with bread/cracker

and juice/wine for that ceremony. Even though I will not be seeing you during the ceremony, you will have the opportunity to watch me as we participate together in spirit. I will be following the liturgy in the United Methodist Hymnal “A Service of Word and Table 11” found on pages 12-15 if you would like to join me at that time. The link that you can also find the liturgy is [Discipleship Ministries web site](#).

In this crucial time in our ministry, like never before, though the church doors are temporally closed, we need to keep the church running. We still pay our bills and continue to engage in mission and ministry. We know it is financially difficult time for all of us. This we totally understand. We are asking, however, that with every possibility, you do not forget to give. For those that give electronically, you are encouraged to continue doing so and for those who write checks, we also encourage you that you continue to do so and mail your checks to the church @ 1833 Park Forest Avenue, State College, PA 16803. We thank you for your faithfulness. We all are in this together and we do believe that ‘God’s Will’ will be done.

Our service will start at our regular worship time and you will be able to join me at that time.

Stay safe and blessed!

Pastor Paul