



# The Lutheran Beacon

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June/July 2020

## Welcoming Spring on March 20, 2020

(Written during the pandemic—a challenge)

by Carole Mertz

Today daffodils are welcoming spring.  
Has winter had its final fling?  
The air billows, lively with birdsong,  
but we wonder, how long our troubles, how long?

We count on doctors, nurses, and particular things  
hoping to give the virus ready wings—  
treatments, ventilators, and clean hospital beds,  
using these to counter our ever-present dreads.

God may be hidden, but He is still there,  
our Helper, even if unbidden, with Good News to share.  
Long may be the night, with new fears aborning—  
we do well to remember joy comes in the morning.

[CAROLE MERTZ IS A MEMBER OF CALVARY LUTHERAN CHURCH IN PARMA OHIO WHERE SHE HAS SERVED AS ORGANIST FOR THE PAST SEVENTEEN YEARS. SHE IS THE AUTHOR OF TOWARD A PEEPING SUNRISE (PROLIFIC PRESS). SHE HAS PUBLISHED WORKS IN OVER 22 LITERARY SITES SINCE JANUARY, 2020. SHE LIVES IN PARMA WITH HER HUSBAND, REV. ROBERT C. MERTZ.]

# Coping with Coronavirus

by Rev. Thomas Soltis

## Pandemic Anxiety

The coronavirus has dramatically impacted lifestyles throughout the world. Social distancing; churches closed; events cancelled; masks; sanitizing; businesses inoperative; job losses; economic instability; deaths; grieving families; escalating uncertainties. The effects could cause feelings of hopelessness. On Good Friday the disciples lost hope. Jesus, unjustly condemned, insulted, flogged, humiliated, crucified and buried left them bewildered. The sight of Him alive after His resurrection drove away their anxieties and hopelessness. Jesus, their anchor of hope, was alive! Valiantly, they forged ahead to proclaim His resurrection and the certainty of salvation through His redemption. "Black" Friday became "Good" Friday. For us, our all-powerful, living, Christ is the fountain of hope to dispel virus anxieties. Trust Him.

## Biblical Encouragements

The righteous are not exempt from suffering. Jesus told His followers: "In this world you will have trouble." (John 16:33)

The Book of Job is a classic examples of a godly, righteous man undergoing great physical and emotional suffering.

St. Paul encourages us: "The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4:6)



David trusted the Lord as his Shepherd. In the face of danger and death he proclaimed: "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and staff they comfort me." (Psalm 23:4)

The coronavirus, an invisible shadow of death, lurks about. Walk with the Good Shepherd, Jesus. He knows how to dispel anxiety and fear. Should you fall, He will pick you up to carry you home.

## Practical Tips for Coping

- ▶ **Be Positive** - Even in good times, psychologists claim 70% of thoughts are negative. Think positive. ▶
- ▶ **Be thankful** - Even in the worst of times, there's something for which to be thankful. Thankfulness uplifts and comforts the soul.
- ▶ **Keep Busy** - A mind engaged in activities has less time to worry.
- ▶ **Improve Yourself** - With time on your hands sharpen your skills. Engage new activities.
- ▶ **Protect Yourself** - Wisely practice social distancing, mask use and sanitizing measures.
- ▶ **Manage the Media** - A constant obsession with virus media reports will create excessive anxiety.
- ▶ **Love a Lot** - Reach out to others with love and helpfulness. You'll end up helping yourself.
- ▶ **Forgive Yourself** - Guilt depresses. Jesus forgave you; forgive yourself and enjoy His peace.
- ▶ **Forgive Others** - Bearing a grudge will make you miserable and only increase viral tensions.
- ▶ **Smile & Laugh a Lot** - Engage happy TV, books, magazines, etc. Happiness is therapeutic.
- ▶ **Keep in Touch** - Contact someone. Don't wait for someone to contact you.
- ▶ **Beware of Hurtful Escapes** - Alcoholism and drugs only compound problems and worries.
- ▶ **Beware of Excessive Depression** - Seek immediate help should suicidal thoughts occur.
- ▶ **Above All ...** Converse with God. Let Him talk to you thru Scripture. Talk to Him in prayer.

### Will Life Ever Be the Same Again?

It's been said that one thing that never changes is change itself. Social scientists are already alerting us that life may not return to its past normal. The economic, political, cultural and spiritual impact of the coronavirus will have lasting effects, hopefully, for the better. It's evident that the culture and lifestyle in recent years has fallen to a moral low. The O.T. Scriptures give account after account of God's punishing judgements upon the Israelites when they fell away from Him, His truths and righteousness. When the nation repented, God relented and his blessings poured forth. The current virus crisis offers an opportune time to echo Christ's mandate: "Repent and believe the Gospel." (Mark 1:15) The uncertainty in times of crisis cause many to seek spiritual answers. Take the time to tell the Jesus story of salvation, peace, comfort, hope and courageous living.

# What's Happening at the Haven

by Diane Leining

Things have slowed down considerably in the past couple of months, just like the rest of the world. Our residents in the independent living cottages are all behaving and taking the social distancing and mask wearing to heart. Their patience is amazing.

Our residents in our medical centers are being real troopers too. Due to CDC regulations, they are not able to come out of their building and no one but staff can enter – even family members. We do our best to keep them busy and active, but it is a strain on some of them. A group of our independent living residents have hosted parades around the campus and especially at our closed facilities. Some of them have also expressed their appreciation to our awesome staff for all their hard work with sidewalk chalk art!

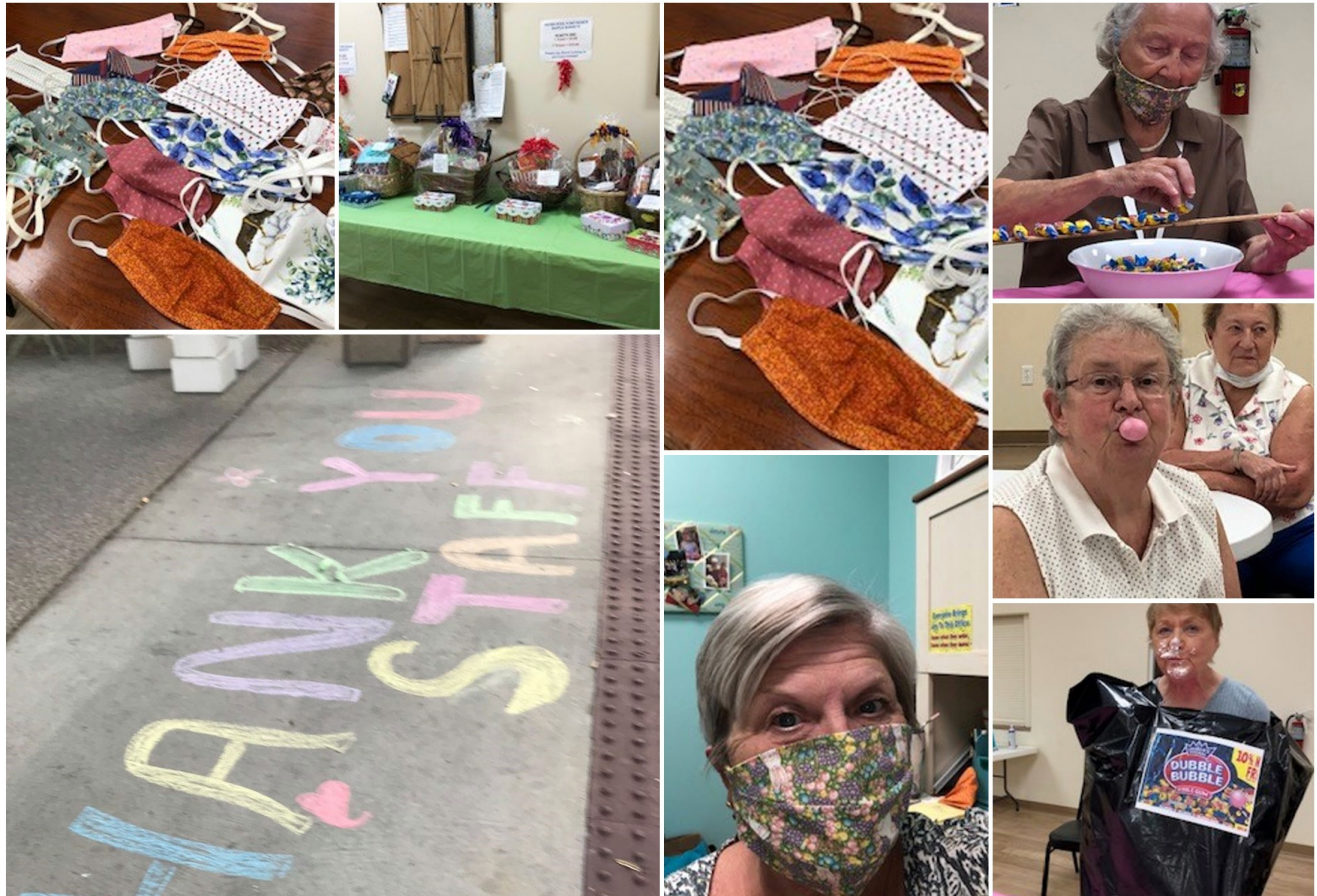
Many of our residents have made hundreds of face masks for our medical staff and residents in the cottages. Beautiful works of art are showing up all over and we so very much appreciate the gifts of these talented folks.

Before the virus became such a bit part of our lives, the Haven Foundation headed a committee to fund-raise for a swimming pool. Our first fund-raiser offered beautiful baskets and a lovely quilt for residents to take a chance on. We choose winners and made a bit over \$1,200 for the fund-raiser. Stay tuned for this effort to warm back up as we get back to a more "normal" lifestyle.

We are offering different activities now, including Trivia, Jeopardy, Brain Games, Improv Classes, Wii Sports entertaining ten (10) people and keeping socially distant. We play a few silly games like Bubble Gum Fun to see who could blow the biggest bubble, line gum on a yardstick in 30 seconds and find the gum in a plateful of whipped cream and then blow a bubble. Good clean fun!!

On a personal note, I am retiring at the end of May after working at the Haven for 18 years. I had the honor of working for Don Kovac for ten years and now Linda Kirk for eight years. I have to say that I have enjoyed every day being with the residents and watching them transition their lives here at the Haven. I will miss all the smiling faces of my residents and the staff that I have been blessed to know. I wish everyone a healthy future and know that God is in control!!

**After all, the Haven is only one letter away from Heaven!! Thank you!!**



## BITS & PIECES

We grieve with **Pastor Ron Meyr**, of Faith Lutheran Church, Viera, FL, at the death of his mother, Doloris Emily (Reisenbichler) Meyr, of Cape Girardeau, Missouri. Deloris was born June 13, 1930 and passed away suddenly on Friday, April 17, 2020.



We also grieve with **Deacon Jim Hurst**, of Calvary Lutheran Church, Parma, OH, at the passing of his mother, Helen W. (Walton) Hurst, of North Ridgeville, Ohio. Helen was born January 26, 1939, she fell asleep in Jesus on Thursday April 2, 2020 in Westlake, Ohio.



**Welcome to Jon Carpenter and family** – Jon Carpenter was called to St. John Lutheran Church in Massillon, OH as the Associate Pastor from Concordia Seminary Fort Wayne. We welcome Jon and his wife Shannon and his children to the SELC!

**Information from the North Wisconsin District** - For over 50 years, the North Wisconsin District has been able to have a chaplain serve at the state-run Wisconsin Veterans' Home in King, Wisconsin.

We have had a full-time LCMS chaplain working there who is fully supported by the District. The state has allowed our chaplain to have an office and work with other chaplains that are employed by them; they welcome his presence. There are over 600 veterans living there and about one-third of them are Lutheran.

Chaplain Wayne Schwanke will be retiring September 1<sup>st</sup> of this year and we will need to replace him. If you are interested in reviewing the job description, please contact Patti Smith at selc.lcms@gmail.com.

**Devotions in Spanish** – Pastor George Hansell at Grace Lutheran in Lakewood, OH is providing devotions in Spanish. Please see his message below. You can follow Grace on Facebook by searching for Grace Lutheran Church. The link is <https://www.facebook.com/Grace-Lutheran-Church-163207950536383/>

Good morning. This message is addressed to all those who speak Spanish or bilingual. I am the Rev. George Hansell, Pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in Lakewood, OH. As a child, I lived in Venezuela for four years. I studied Spanish at school in my youth and also in school and college. I served my Vicariate Year at El Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in McAllen, Texas. For four years after my seminary studies, I served as a general missionary in the city of Detroit. Although my Spanish is not perfect, I am willing to serve you as I can, and especially those families who are bilingual. For this week, I'm doing some devotionals in Spanish.

### Shepherd's Canyon Retreat Ministry

Shepherd's Canyon Retreat Ministry is offering support if you need it. Please know that you can contact District President Vinovskis or Pastor Chris Cahill if you have any questions or find yourself in need of assistance. This service from Shepherd's Canyon will be of no cost to you. The SELC District will cover the cost for your conversations with Shepherd's Canyon.

During the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, the Shepherd's Canyon Retreat ministry is offering the services of our Support Team (SCR counselors), who are available to offer online emotional and spiritual support to professional church workers—ordained and lay—who are struggling with burnout, depression, anxiety, relationship concerns (church or personal) or other challenges. Give us a call at 206-601-5217 and we will respond to your questions and assist you with the appropriate arrangements.

# **SPIRITual Ignition and Re-ignition**

by Pastor Ken Ballas, EM

With the observance of our Lord's bodily ascension into heaven 40 days after Easter (May 21), Pentecost Sunday (May 31) and Trinity Sunday (June 7), we are again rapidly approaching the end of the festival half of the Christian Church Year as well as, hopefully, a productive season of God-pleasing, people-helping growth that glorifies His holy name.

Whether applied to gas-powered lawnmowers, car engines or to the latest NASA space probe, nothing positive takes place without a critical moment of ignition. The New Testament Greek word *dynamis* (from which we also derive the word "dynamite") occurs both with reference to Christ's liberating Gospel (see Rom. 1:16) as well as to the powerful working of the Holy Spirit (aptly also called "the Spirit of Jesus" in Acts 16:7).

Spending even a few minutes with an English Bible concordance (cf. e.g., Zech. 4:6), comparing the words "power" and "Spirit" may reveal as many as a dozen passages in which both concepts occur in the same immediate context. Still recalling the ignition image, whenever God's powerful Spirit is found in tandem with God's Word of Law and especially Gospel, the potential exists for a dynamically positive life-giving explosion of eternal dimensions.

Our ever-living Lord's apostle Paul reminds us baptized believing Christians in his last letter that the indwelling Spirit of God is much like an inexhaustible fire ever ready to kindle into flame (or re-kindle!) each of us as intentionally productive heaven-bound pilgrims well equipped to carry out His saving will to an otherwise dying world without Christ (2 Tim.1:6-7).

Recalling biblical injunctions for God's forgiven people to continue to grow suggests that, this side of heaven, there is always "room for improvement" in living the Christian life (2 Pet. 3:18; Phil. 3:12ff.), ask yourself during these seemingly endless weeks and months of the current pandemic, "What is it that our God may be waiting for me as a member of my local family of believers to do not only in merely "coping with: but, with the Spirit's powerfully-igniting Gospel means of grace in successfully combating a particular physical or spiritual viral ailment or sinful addiction?"

Prayerfully ask Him to supply His own new and perhaps surprisingly better replacement activity as we are led by the same powerful Spirit of Truth to ascertain His will including both a desire consciously to witness by word and deed His blood-bought redeeming love for each of us in the next 40 or 50-day period of our earthly pilgrimage: "LIVING LORD JESUS, increase our faith in Your unfailing promise to be with Your Church on earth that we may boldly and increasingly carry out Your saving will on earth as it is already being done in heaven!"

Should any of the foregoing seems impossibly difficult or unrealistic, daily "betake thyself" not to a local garage (or place of questionable amusement) but to stand beneath the cross of our sinless Brother-Savior Jesus Christ to recharge your spiritual battery and ignition system. You'll be glad that you did as will countless other people. And so will our loving God.

## God's Promises

by Linda Gari, Lutheran Bible Translators

Rain streams down the gutters, over the roads, and digs deep grooves into the dirt roads, converting them into riverbeds. It pounds on the tin roofs and relentlessly pours into all the tiny holes until the old ceilings in our house begin to bow under the weight of their rain-soaked boards. Drips begin and we put containers all around to catch the drips. It beats on the office windows until it flows through, leaving everything in its wake wet or damp. There goes some of each box of computer paper for three up-country teams, some small books are ruined, and a small flood washes the office floors. Rainy season is in full swing.

I started thinking about what it must have been like for Noah and his family those 40 days when I was grumbling about not being able to dry any of my clothes. Since it is raining outside most of the time I have to hang all the clothes inside and sometimes they sour or mildew. I'm sure it was worse for them hanging things inside the ark. Not only that, but imagine sharing their space with all those animals! I pictured cows with clothes on their horns and goats pulling things off the lines! It made me chuckle to myself!

We can replace the paper and books, mend or replace the roof. The clothes will eventually dry or will be replaced. All these things are temporal and earthly. God's promises are ours forever. They will not fade in the sun or be tarnished in any way. We have His promise of a bright future with Him in heaven for eternity."

The missionaries who wrote this letter didn't know that they would soon be displaced by wars that raged in Sierra Leone and Liberia. It was a traumatic and stressful time as they had to leave the people and community they had come to love to an uncertain future. With God's help and the support of family, friends and a tremendous group of prayer and financial partners, they went on to serve in Botswana until their retirement in 2010.

"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble." May this reminder from Psalm 46 bring you comfort during this difficult time. We're praying for you, our communities, the world, as we work from home to bring God's Word to those still waiting for His empowering Word.

## Soldiers of the Cross Funding Available

The Soldiers of the Cross funds which are administered through the Synod and jointly funded by the Synod and District are intended to help church workers pay their living expenses: housing expenses, food, utilities, health care, etc. They are not intended to pay for "church or school" expenses like: mortgages, utilities for the institution, etc. The LCEF is providing resources and loans to congregations and schools to provide for those kinds of expenses for congregations.

Please contact the District if you would like an application form for the Soldiers of the Cross funding. The District Office has a form for you to complete. Please contact President Vinovskis or Patti Smith at [selc.lcms@gmail.com](mailto:selc.lcms@gmail.com). To access LCEF resources for churches and schools, you can contact our District Vice-President, David Thiele: [david.thiele@lcef.org](mailto:david.thiele@lcef.org).

# We Never Meant to Give up So Much

by Pastor Michael Salemink, Executive Director of Mission and Ministry, Lutherans for Life

Looking back, we never meant to give up so much for Lent. Quarantines have swapped out many of the “cans” in our cupboards. The pandemic has instead stocked our pantries up with “cannots.” We cannot visit. We cannot go and gather. We cannot shop. We cannot go to school or church.

Thankfully our God has no travel restrictions. Our Father does not participate in social distancing. Our Savior knows no threat of contagion or infection. Our Lord emptied Himself to be with us. If He is now emptying us, He does so only to bring us to Himself.

So since we cannot do, let us fall on Him and rest in Him. Let us ask. Let us beg and plead. Let us hope. We covet your prayers. He covets them even more.

For our congregations, pastors, and brother and sister parishioners: Lord Jesus, You died that God would never leave us alone. You rose to embrace us through forgiveness in Your household and kingdom. Your love sustains us still. Let this season of exile from Your sacraments and the services of Your house foster in us a hunger for Your Word. Keep the disconnect from leading any of Your people to despair. Gladden hearts with daily bread even in financial distress and strengthen the bonds of family during the strains. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

For our acquaintances, relatives, and friends suffering illness: Lord Jesus, You died to carry our sickness and bear our sorrows away. You rose to give us everlasting life in the resurrection of the body. Your presence sustains us still. Grant quick relief and complete healing to those who must endure affliction. Make them whole, not just in body but in soul, with Your promises to deliver from every evil. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

For caregivers, medical professionals, safety personnel, service-industries workers, parents with children at home, and especially single and working mothers and fathers: Lord Jesus, You died to suffer alongside us and in our stead. You rose to serve us always and everywhere with heaven’s treasures.

Your might sustains us still. Invigorate those whose vocations convey Your care in public and private ways. Furnish them with resources, supplies, and space to minister effectively out of Your own abundance. Shield them from exhaustion and endangerment and multiply patience to them. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

For vulnerable neighbors, especially unborn children and elderly persons: Lord Jesus, You died to declare and demonstrate the sanctity of every human life from fertilization to forever. You rose to proclaim the worth and purpose of all humankind and put it into practice. Your grace sustains us still. Bid us receive both the youngest and the oldest among us as blessings rather than only as burdens. Inspire our society to resist the temptation to use death as a solution to difficulties or to use suffering as an excuse to discard lives. Bring an end to abortion, euthanasia, suicide, and embryo experiments. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

For our elected authorities, public officials, researchers, and journalists: Lord Jesus, You died to reveal the mind of our God and open to us the Father’s heart. You rose to scatter all darkness with the light of Your fullness in immortality. Your truth sustains us still. Work wisdom in those whom You have entrusted with responsibility and information. Drive all panic and exaggeration from them. Endow them with understanding of sound science, clear reason, and open communication that they may maintain order and justice for the common good. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

For our postponed and upcoming activities: Lord Jesus, You died to set Your holy salvation at work in, through, and for us. You rose to invite us into Your reign over the new heavens and earth. Your will sustains us still. In this time of restraint, let us not lose any enthusiasm for the labors which You have given us. Expand our opportunities as Gospel-motivated voices For Life. And when once again we enjoy freedom of movement, amplify our witness to how You have created, redeemed, and called every human being as a precious gift. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer. Amen!

Published with permission by Pastor Michael Salemink

## **Faculty-Led Workshop Series offered online**

### **13 workshops address contemporary topics that influence ministry**

Pastors, church workers and laypeople are invited to Concordia Seminary, St. Louis' Prof Insights: Faculty-Led Workshop Series to explore contemporary topics that influence the practice of ministry and worship.

Formerly known as the Summer Workshop Series, the Prof Insights' workshops provide three days of in-depth study taught by Seminary faculty members. Due to concerns about the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, these workshops will be held live online this year. The 2020 workshops cover topics ranging from Pre-Constantinian theology to post-denominational challenges and from the psalms to 1 Peter.

"We are excited for our faculty to share their expertise with people around the world, and we hope attendees enjoy the series!" said Director of Continuing Education Erika Bennett. "The new name for this series allows us to extend workshops beyond the summertime to the entire calendar year, and this year's online format allows attendees to participate from the comfort of their homes."

The cost for each workshop is \$100 unless otherwise noted, which includes Continuing Education Unit (CEU) credits for pastors. Registration and payment should be made no later than three weeks before the beginning of each workshop. Each workshop must have a minimum of 12 participants in order to be held, and registrations are capped at 25 participants.

Learn more and register for the workshops at [csl.edu/workshop-series](http://csl.edu/workshop-series). Please contact Continuing Education at 314-505-7286 or [ce@csl.edu](mailto:ce@csl.edu) with questions.

This is the first of our two summer issues covering June /July.

This is your newsletter . . . Articles & Photos are welcome! Send to:

[gailpete37@yahoo.com](mailto:gailpete37@yahoo.com)

**Deadline for the August/September issue of The Lutheran Beacon is JULY 12<sup>TH</sup>.**