



March 18, 2020

A Pastoral Letter from the Bishops of the Moravian Unity in North America:

We greet each of you at this time of considerable uncertainty with the grace, mercy, and peace of the great shepherd of the sheep, Jesus Christ. In the 6th chapter of the Gospel of Mark we read that just after Jesus had taken his disciples across the Sea of Galilee, he stepped off the boat, saw a large crowd, and had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. We are confident that today Jesus' heart of compassion is extended towards a world that is indeed a worried one. We are part of a health crisis that is touching all parts of our Moravian world, so we extend our prayers in all directions and invite you to humbly pray in like manner.

It is during these times of uncertainty that we are most thankful for moments when we can rest our souls in God's presence. We come assuring you that the Holy Spirit surrounds us, fills us, opens our hearts to receive God's love, and empowers us to share this blessing with others. We come in faith, knowing that nothing can separate us from God's love. We are thankful for the hope that God brings us even when all else seems senseless. May you feel God's sustaining love beneath you, lifting you to make the most of the days that are ahead of us.

We want you to know that together we pray:

- We pray God's blessings on all those who have already fallen ill to this virus. We pray for their healing and wholeness, but most notably, we pray that they will be comforted in knowing that they are not alone. We pray for their families who worry and wonder how best to care for them. We pray for God's solace to be upon the families who have lost a loved one to this this disease.
- We pray God's blessings on the medical professionals who are working tirelessly to care for the sick. We pray for God's guidance upon the scientists who are now laboring to contain the outbreak.
- We pray that the comfort of the Holy Spirit might encourage those who are afraid. We pray most fervently for our children who are experiencing these days in their most impressionable years.
- We pray for wisdom, compassion, and humility for our governmental leaders as they seek to marshal resources to where they are most needed and make decisions that will benefit the common good, especially those on the margins of our societies.

- We pray for God's hand to be upon our provincial and district leaders, pastors, board members, and our congregations as together we seek to BE the church in new and creative ways. Keep us ever mindful of those for whom this crisis is a threat to mental, spiritual, and physical health.

Even as we are asked to keep our social distance from each other, we pray that God might draw us closer to one another in faith, in love, and in hope. In these days may we gain a deeper understanding of God's love for us in Jesus Christ in whom all things can be made new.

Finally, we close with this prayer:

Creator of the heavens and earth, praise be to your holy name. We pray that the gracious ways of heaven may be made real in the world in which we live. We hunger for much more than food today, and we pray that you will satisfy us, and all who have need. We are awed by your forgiving nature and pray that you would inspire us to forgive each other in like manner. While we know that you have created us to be holy, we ask that you keep us from the temptation of living a life which would tarnish your image within us. You have created a world that is holy, and your glory and power are displayed in many wonderful ways. We give thanks for your daily blessings even as we live into eternity. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Know that the Lord is God. Psalm 100:3

...and they were terrified. But Jesus said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." John 6:20

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me.

Psalm 23:4

In Service to our Chief Elder,
Bishops of the Moravian Unity Residing in the Northern Province
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