

March 25, 2020

Dear Church,

In our gospel reading for this coming Sunday, we read in John 11:21 that Martha is in deep grief because of her brother Lazarus' death. When Jesus arrives, she makes a remarkable statement, "If you had been here, my brother would not have died." It is a remarkable statement because even in the midst of her grief, Martha is not without faith. She believes in Jesus' power to heal and bring life. Martha's statement is a good reminder, not only of the possibility of facing a tragic situation with faith, but also of the power of God to encourage our hearts even in the middle of our grief. It gets even better though. Jesus responds, "Your brother will rise again." Soon, Lazarus walks out of his grave, alive once more.

As I'm sure you know, on Tuesday, the Fort Bend County Judge ordered that its residents Stay Home and Work Safe in their places of residence. This means we will be worshipping together online-only this weekend and quite possibly for several weeks to come.

One of the most important things we can do together in this time is pray. We can pray for our world, our leaders, our healthcare providers, our first responders, all those impacted by the COVID-19 virus. One of our church members asked if we could pray in some organized way. She and I agreed together to pray at 5:16pm each evening until this whole thing comes to an end and life as "normal" returns. We decided on 5:16 because James 5:16b says, "The prayers of the righteous are powerful and effective." So far, the Faith staff as well as my family and I have been praying together at 5:16pm every evening for a week. For me and my family, this has become a nice way to end our afternoon together. It's something I've come to look forward to. I hope you will choose to do this too.

The world-wide health crisis is a tragic situation. As people of faith, we have so much to look forward to, and like Martha, we can face this tragic situation with faith because we believe in the resurrection. One day, Faith UMC will worship together in person at 4600 FM 359. In the meantime, let's stay healthy and strong, trusting in the Lord.

Peace,
John Stephenson
Lead Pastor