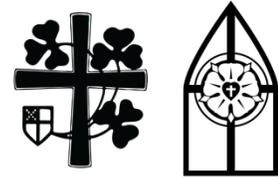


**St. Patrick's Episcopal Church
Lutheran Church of Our Saviour
4800 Old Dawson Road
Albany, GA 31721**



Beloved,

I miss you, and I grieve missing you.

This week marks a time when generations upon generations of Christians have gathered together to observe and remember the sacred stories of Holy Week that bind our faith to the crucified and risen Christ.

From the triumphal entrance of the King of Kings to the servant leader who washes our feet to the lowest death of a criminal on the cross, Jesus' descent to the dead has become a journey that could well describe our experience in these last few days and weeks. The inability of us to mark this time together in these days is crippling, both practically and emotionally, as part of our innate response to suffering is connection.

And yet, perhaps theologically, we have an invitation to marking this time as a journey through the valley of the shadow of death with Christ himself. That when two or three are gathered in his name, in our homes or online, we are beckoned toward the cross and tomb for which our baptism has prepared us.

We are also reminded that experiencing solitude, loneliness, or restlessness are not new to those who dared to follow the way of the cross so long ago. In some ways, the first Holy Week was marked by the chaos of shifting authoritarian behavior and reaction, the disciples scattering for fear and hiding away in their homes, something that may well resonate with our current situation.

We remember and highlight the few women – the essential personnel, if you will – who couldn't stay home, who first witnessed the empty tomb, and Mary Magdalene, who emerges as the first apostle to proclaim the good news: Christ is risen!

We, like those first witnesses or huddled disciples, now live expectantly for a word of good news that will send us back into the world. Before that comes, how might it look for us to remember where our true hope lies? Perhaps not in a return to the ways the world carries along offering us a temporary peace with ourselves and others, but instead, like Easter, how it all might be different because of what God has delivered us from in this coming hour.

My heart, my love, and my constant prayers are with you,

Nick†

Members of St. Patrick's and Our Saviour,

This Easter we find our country, as well as the entire world, continuing to struggle under the deadly COVID-19 pandemic. The highly contagious virus has made it necessary for us to practice physical distancing, to include many working from home. While I'm not a social butterfly, the situation has reminded me that often we do not appreciate things we take for granted until we don't have them. I'm talking about the simple act of interacting with others...I miss it greatly! And much of the socialization I'm missing comes from our church, and from each of you!

The news of the pandemic which seemed to initially include some rays of hope, now continues to worsen, day by day. Probably a lot like the experiences of the disciples during the time of the first Easter. The arrest of Jesus...the rejection of Jesus in favor of Barabbas...the trial...the scourging, the mocking, casting lots for his garments, and ultimately, the crucifixion. The disciples pretty much scattered during the Easter ordeal!

However, we have not scattered. The leadership of St. Patrick's and Our Saviour continue to keep you in our thoughts, prayers, and actions. Fr. Nick has put together a virtual "Holy Week at Home" worship schedule that promotes spiritual unity through prayer. And we have embarked on an action item that will assist our church through these challenging times. I'd like to update you on two of them:

1. We are working to apply for a loan through the Small Business Administration, as allowed by the recent CARES Act. The loan is to provide funding to continue paying our employees, and churches are eligible. If the funding is used in this way, it is "forgivable", like a grant. Fr. Nick and Sam Stringer, our Treasurer, have worked hard with guidance from the Diocese to prepare the application. This should give us some short-term relief for our ministry personnel budget.

2. Normally, we would be considering our contribution to the Alleluia Fund at Easter, which ironically, exists to support us in times of uncertainty. This year is a little bit different. We have worked quickly to respond to urgent needs of our parishioners and those in the community as they become known. Even as some of us have been impacted by this pandemic, others may yet be impacted in the weeks and months to come. As a result, there are inevitably some of us who will not be able to complete our pledges this year, understandably. Another part of the CARES Act included a roughly \$1,200 one-time payment to support those in the lower income brackets. I am encouraging those of us who may qualify for this payment who have been able to continue working/maintain our income to consider giving this one-time payment or a portion of it to the church, as an addition to our pledges. Fr. Nick has committed his entire \$1,200 to the church in gratitude for all of your ministry to one another during this time. This could be a wonderful and unexpected Easter offering to help the church in this tough economic time. If able, I hope you will join me in making an additional gift to sustain our ministry and help those in need who fall into the gaps of the government's efforts.

We will also continue to make calls to the congregation, in order to see how everyone is doing. And to help when required. In the meantime, continue to practice physical distancing and take care of yourselves! Our reunion as a congregation will eventually be possible and will be such a joyous occasion!

In Christ,

Joe Wingard, Senior Warden