

Alleluia, Christ is risen!

Brothers and Sisters,

I come to you today in a world which has been turned upside-down by a world-wide pandemic ... by the Coronavirus, Covid-19, or whatever people want to call it. Over the years we've been blessed when you gathered with Shepherd of the Hills for vacation worship, for Advent devotionals, for Christmas Eve, in friendship, or as part of our mission to be a welcoming Lutheran congregation in the middle of Appalachia.

Unfortunately, we know that not all congregations have found ways to recover from the social distancing shutdowns have hamstrung so many congregations. Therefore, we decided to reach out in these difficult times to ensure you have an ability to safely worship with technology, to hear the Word preached live, and to study God's word all without needing to leave your home.

Because this is where many of us find ourselves each day unless we are essential workers. We are hunkered down with loved ones, and locked behind closed doors, afraid to go out. Unless it is to find food or to obtain medication. But this is Easter right, "***Alleluia, Christ is Risen!***" Christ *is* with us! Death *has lost* its hold!!! *What* are we afraid of? Yes, Governors, local, *and* national political leaders *cannot always agree* about *what to do*? Likewise, our medical experts have differing views about how we should move forward? Where are you LORD? Yet, isn't this precisely *when* Christ appeared ... in a *locked* room? In each of ***our*** locked rooms?

Our Lord's words are why we've reached out to you today. "*Peace I leave with U ... my peace I give to you, I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled ... and do not let them be afraid.*" (JN 14:27) We want you to know how if you are missing worship or unable to study the word that you are welcome to join with us at least until things begin returning to normal ... or to whatever new normal arises around us. Peace be with you!

Pastor Rick