

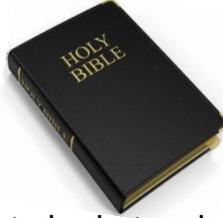


# Linway Church In Touch

*Staying In Touch Without Touch*

**April 8, 2020**

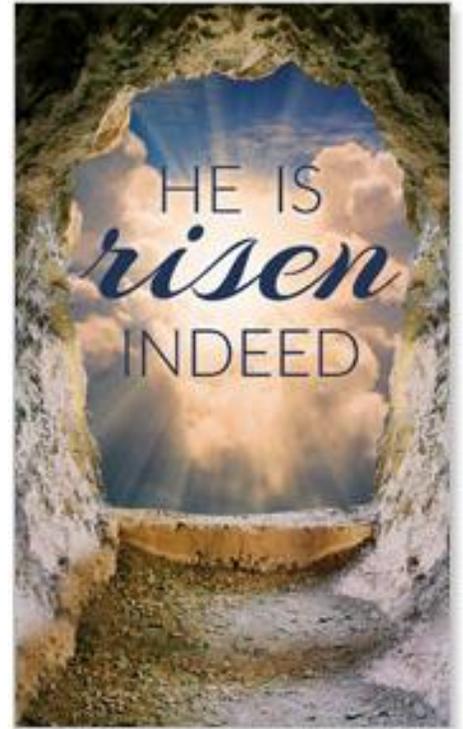
## MESSAGE FROM THE PASTOR



Dear Friends,

Greetings! It is time again to be in touch without actually physically touching one another. Can you believe it? We have completed more than three weeks of *social separation* and continue to be restricted in our activities due to the Corona Virus. As I write, the *shelter in place* declaration is to continue for several more weeks at the very least. While it seems so strange not being able to gather for worship in the Sanctuary, it looks like we will not be able to do that for some time yet. Any early interest in *social distancing* has worn thin. We are told that what provides our unity is our desire to seek the best for others and to do whatever we can to defeat this pandemic. Actually, I believe what holds us together is the Holy Spirit.

This coming Lord's Day, April 12<sup>th</sup>, is Easter Sunday. I cannot begin to tell you that the suspension of worship services in the Lord's House for any Lord's Day (Sunday) let alone the celebration of Easter, never crossed my mind. If someone would have suggested it when I was in Seminary, I would have joined my classmates in absolute disbelief. To my knowledge there is no historical precedent for such a happening, not just in my lifetime. The Good News is that **Christ is Risen!** Nothing, not even the Corona Virus Pandemic can change this. This Easter Sunday may feel very different, but the truth it represents has not changed. My prayer is that the current circumstance will only increase our desire to come to the Lord's House for worship when the all clear signal is given. Please remember that it is out of an abundance of caution that requires us to not gather for holy worship until the pandemic has subsided. That being said, I am asking once again that you take time, find time, and make time, for your own private or family devotional worship. It is the best we can do under the circumstance.



In an effort to assist you, let me first share with you the Scripture readings designated for this coming Sunday, April 12<sup>th</sup>, Easter, the Day of Resurrection:

- Old Testament: Jeremiah 31: 1-6
- Psalm 118: 1-2, 14-24
- Epistle: Acts 10: 34-43
- Gospel: John 20:1-18

As before, I encourage you to read one or all of the Scripture texts. I would like to share with you the Gospel lesson of John 20:1-18. If you had to name three things that have changed the history of the world, what would they be? There are many worthy candidates such as the Horse Collar (increased agricultural production), the Printing Press (the spread of ideas and knowledge), and who could forget Computers and the Internet (providing almost instant access to information and communication around the world). Actually, this list could become very long. However, I want to suggest three that many might overlook: **the Cross, the Tomb, and the Stone.**



The **Cross** of Christ was a stunning declaration of God's unconditional love and ultimate sacrifice to overcome the power of sin. The cross is the hinge-point of human history. No other world religion has anything like it. The cross offers to the world forgiveness, reconciliation, and hope. The cross is recognized around the world as the symbol of the Christian faith. The heavenly Father used it to change **everything.**

But without the **Tomb** the cross would fade to a story in which a prophet would have been put to death for daring to oppose the forces of this world. A tomb is where we place the body of a dead person. Jesus was dead. He did not have a near death experience. He was stone cold dead. If Jesus was not dead, then the cross is a sham and the resurrection is smoke and mirrors. The earliest witnesses bear testimony to Jesus who was transformed. He was alive in a new way beyond the limits of time and space. The tomb is where something amazing happened that directs those who believe to our own future transformation.

The **Stone** that sealed the tomb is not in a museum. That chunk of limestone, carved for the purpose of fitting snugly to block the entrance into and exit from the tomb, is nowhere to be found. This stone was not able to resist the power of God. It could not contain the Risen Christ. The guards posted at the tomb had one job to do: *no one, but no one, comes near or touches that stone!* The tomb was sealed by this stone, and it was to stay that way. And yet on the morning of the third day (Easter), the stone was rolled away, and the tomb is found to be empty.

The Day of Resurrection (Easter) is **the greatest** celebration of the Christian faith. While I long for the opportunity to share it with you in the Linway Sanctuary dedicated for worship, it must also be celebrated as an act of faith in the human heart. When asked: *which commandment is the first of all? Jesus answered: The first is, 'Hear O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.'* The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." Mark 12:28-31.

Once again, I am asking you to intentionally read one or more of the above Scripture texts, to think of its meaning in and for your life. I also ask you to pray for the sick, the poor, and those in need. Expand your prayer to include those providing medical assistance to all whose health is impaired and not just those afflicted by this pandemic. Pray for our elected leaders at all levels of government that their decisions will aid our community, state, and country in providing assistance to those in need, not only medically but economically.

Please know that you are in my thoughts and prayers. I will be writing to you again next week. In the meantime, keep the faith and stay safe. God bless you.

Grace and Peace to You and Yours,

Eric E. Dennis, Pastor



### **Good Friday Fast and Reflection**

The Session of Linway Church invites you to join them in exercising the Spiritual Discipline of Fasting this Good Friday, April 10 by selecting one meal to fast from. If fasting would cause you a health issue, then please do not fast from a meal. We don't want you to do anything that would injure your health.

This Good Friday, take the opportunity to reflect on the meaning of Jesus' Passion and read John 18:1 thru John 19:42. Reflect upon what this means to each of us individually, to the church at large, and to our Linway Congregation. Jesus paid the price for **our** sin by offering His life at the command of the Heavenly Father. This was God's way of reconciling the world unto Himself. *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.* John 3:16-17.

**Online Video Message Now on the Linway Website at [www.LinwayChurch.org](http://www.LinwayChurch.org)**

Facebook is no longer needed to view the online video message from Rev. Dennis. The church website is being updated and now contains a link to the video message in which Rev. Dennis expands on his message that he shares in the In Touch letters. Future online messages are planned for Easter Sunday and the remaining Sundays that we do not hold worship service in the Sanctuary. The weekly In Touch letter containing Rev. Dennis' weekly message will continue to be mailed through US Mail and sent by email.

**EASTER BUNNY & EA TEACHER PARADE**

**SATURDAY, APRIL 11 Noon-3:30**

To lift the spirits of the children and residents of the North Versailles, Wall, Wilmerding, and East McKeesport Communities!

**CELEBRATE FROM YOUR PORCH!**

Local Fire Departments will be parading the Easter Bunny and East Allegheny Teachers through the EA Community by driving throughout the streets this Saturday, April 11, 2020 from Noon-3:30.

**Listen for the sirens and cheer/wave your hearts out!**



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