

“In Times Like This”

*1 Peter 3:15 (NIV) Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.*

Friends, it has been 54 days since we have worshipped together as the Body of Christ. I pray that you are continuing to worship as you shelter-in-place by: continuing your daily devotions, reading Scripture daily, meditating, praying, watching your favorite United Methodist live-streamed worship services, following our weekly messages and reading my Meditation on Mount Jackson Charge's Facebook page. We apologize that we have not been able to live-stream from our sanctuary. At this time, we do not have the capacity. We do not have internet at Quicksburg and poor and spotty reception in the Mount Jackson sanctuary. I have tested streaming at Mount Jackson and there is some type of interference on the video. There is the possibility of live-streaming off site or a pre-recorded message once my vocal cord issue is resolved. Continue to pray for both.

We are happy to report that most people in our congregations are staying safe and healthy. There have been no reported COVID-19 issues among our members. If I am incorrect, please let me know as I am required to file reports with the district. Thank all of you for praying for each other and especially those who have been sick. We praise God that both Ken Hackenbracht and Bonnie McKenzie are home after being hospitalized for a few days. It is with both sadness and joy that we report that Frances Zirkle claimed the promise of the resurrection on April 3.

Congratulations are offered to Josh, Amber and Clara Stephens of Quicksburg on the birth of a daughter and sister, Charlotte Ann, on April 22. Very soon we hope to hear from Katie and Brandon Byram, as they await their gift from God. Also, please wish Jonathan and Chrissy (Koontz) congratulations on their scheduled May 2 marriage. Jonathan and Chrissy are planning a reception at a time when we can all be together to celebrate. Using phone calls, social media and snail mail, continue to offer your thanksgivings, condolences, praises, and congratulations to these families. And be in touch with one another to offer an encouraging word, or just to check in.

Our Dorcas group and ladies of both churches continue to make face masks for free distribution. Earlier in the month we opened our churches four afternoons for members to come and receive their masks. Many came but there are many more of you that we haven't reached. We understand that many of you have received, purchased or been given masks from family, friends, or other organizations. PLEASE, PLEASE, IF YOU NEED A FACE MASK, call the church office at (540) 477-2128 and we will arrange for you to get your mask. It is imperative when you're out in public, that you wear a mask to protect others as well as yourself. As suggested by the president, CDC, governor and bishop, please shelter-in-place, practice social distancing, wear a face covering in public and wash your hands for twenty seconds with soap and warm water and try not to touch your mouth. It is being proved that these practices make a difference.

Also, the May-June UPPERROOM is available at each church. If you wish to have a copy and are unable to get one, please call the church office, state that you would like to have a copy and leave your contact information. We will attempt to get you a copy.

Our church buildings continue to be closed and worship cancelled through June 10 by order of our bishop following the governor's guidelines. Violation of this policy would contradict the local, district, and conference mandates. We all want to return to worshipping together as soon as possible. Even if a few would gather, we could unknowingly be carriers of the virus, jeopardizing the health of others – even those we would meet after we departed. This virus uses geometric progression. God will see us through this difficult time.

Scripture reminds us of God's blessings and the privilege of returning the tithe to the Lord. Even though the buildings are closed, we continue our ministries, paying our apportionments, and other commitments. As you are able, we offer you the opportunity to send your financial gifts to your church: Mt. Jackson UMC, P.O. Box 27, Mount Jackson, VA 22842 or Quicksburg UMC, P.O. Box 81, Quicksburg, VA 22847. Thank you to everyone who has already made a contribution, as well as to those who donate in the future.

As we continue in the Season of Easter, remember we are Resurrection People. We will resurrect even from this pandemic. The church and the world will not be the same. The way we do church has changed and will radically change. We have been challenged to seek new and creative ways to reach our people and be the church. Just as the Divine has done throughout history, God will bring good out of this unprecedented time. The faithful will grow stronger and the faithless have the opportunity to turn toward or away from God, the One in charge of all things. Let us be the light to all we encounter. Continue to care for God's creation and all creatures. Spread the Good News by being the good news. We have many opportunities through worldwide and local ministries. One can make a difference. Check on the elderly, infirm and your neighbors. There may be errands or chores that could safely be provided. Don't be afraid to ask if you might help someone. And those of you who are in need, DON'T be afraid to ASK FOR HELP. Blessings flow both ways – the giver and receiver. Don't rob anyone of those blessings.

A friendly reminder as I close. If you have a computer, please "Like" Mount Jackson Charge Facebook page so that you may follow us. We continue to post words of encouragements and announcements. Weekly, I post a Meditation/Sermon on Sunday morning by 9 a.m. Please ponder it and when possible, print it and pass it along to those who do not have a computer or don't follow Facebook. We give thanks for all the essential personnel who continue to work in today's hostile environment.

Friends, be safe and smart. Trust God in all things. Serving in the Name of the Risen Savior, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen

Pastor Darwin

*<sup>13</sup>No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it. – 1 Corinthians 10:13 (NRSV)*

