



+Bishop Aitken's Easter Message

*"Do not be afraid;
go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee;
there they will see me."*

Jesus: Matthew 28:10, from our appointed Easter Lesson

Dear Synod,

I do not argue that there is no reason to fear these days. Fear is reasonable. COVID-19 is real, and dangerous, and not yet over. I do not naively think all is right with our world, it isn't. I only faithfully proclaim to you that our Risen Lord Jesus, on that Easter morning, knowing there would be plenty of questions, knowing there was still plenty to fear for his followers, said to them, "do not be afraid, go and tell others I will see them soon." And they did go in the power of that promise. And he did see them soon. And they were empowered once again.

Fear was and is reasonable. But fear doesn't bring life. On Easter morning, fear got trumped by something better. They put Jesus to death, but God raised him to new life! Christ is no longer confined to the tomb and so is present everywhere; In the Word proclaimed to you tomorrow, and next Sunday; in that hymn you very well might sing along to as you participate from home, in the Scriptures you meditate on during the week, in the forgiveness someone will grant you and yes, in the call of God to help someone this week. Our risen Lord is in the stranger who you might meet this week, in your congregation's and our Synod's ministries continued even if coronavirus is not peaked or turned the corner. Jesus is raised from the dead and cannot be bound. And just as he told those first witnesses who had every reason to be very afraid, he tells us which is 'Do not be afraid, but go and share the good news.'

There is a promise given to you, one that you can count on, not only this Easter week-end, but in the days and weeks ahead. It also is an appointed text for Easter this year:

"For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." (Colossians 3:3)

Your life is not really your own. You are beloved by and called by God to Jesus' risen life; It was and is God's dream for you no matter what the external affairs are tomorrow. Your life is hidden with Christ in God. Fear may come, but fear cannot match Christ's gift of new life, which he shares abundantly. Fear cannot stand long in his presence. In the Scriptures we are promised that being baptized means being baptized into his death AND resurrection." New life is already inside you because he lives and grants you this life each day through the Holy Spirit. It is in that truth, that we can live his resurrection life, each one of us, in the way we relate to each other, in the way we talk about coronavirus, in our support for those on the front lines of science, medicine, and intelligent care giving.

Peace and courage to you in Christ,
+Bishop Thomas M. Aitken