



# Hope is alive

## How could the situation change so drastically in just one week?

It's really difficult to believe what we're hearing.

Anxiety is high, tears are flowing, and the admonition is "Do not touch."

Huddled together in an effort to stay safe from what is on the outside, confusion and fear abound. Questions come much faster than answers: How could this be? What's going to happen next? Are we in danger?

Though this scenario could easily describe the coronavirus pandemic, this was also the situation surrounding the death and resurrection of Jesus. The triumphant entry into Jerusalem just days before had become lost to a time of mourning and disillusionment. The disciples, locked together in a room, were fearful of what would become of them. They had given up everything to follow Jesus, and now he was dead. Would they be next?

Three days later, Mary Magdalene wept outside the empty tomb where Jesus had been buried. She was distraught that his body was gone.

Then an unmistakable voice called her name and asked why she was crying. She turned and saw it was Jesus. Most likely she was eager to throw her arms around him, but Jesus warned her not to come near.

It took Mary and the disciples a bit to fathom the fact that, indeed, their Lord had risen from the dead.

We, too, are finding our current situation a little hard to believe. We won't be physically gathering together this Sunday for Easter services. The most important celebration of the Christian church calls us to community. But, as in so many other facets of our lives, we will adapt. For several weeks, we have been learning to worship and create community in different ways.

## What hasn't changed, however, is that hope is alive.

As tough as this time of social distancing is, we are not alone, and we can rely on the God who has promised to be our refuge and our strength — a very present help in times of trouble. Many of you who have participated in various devotional opportunities have listed innumerable things for which you are thankful. We have much to celebrate. We are grateful for those who are caring for the sick and vulnerable; for those who are making it possible to obtain food, medicine and other essentials; and for those whose words and actions warm our hearts and bring smiles to our faces.

You have also made known heartfelt and urgent pleas for God's help. We will continue to pray for one another and for friends and family members, for those who have tested positive for COVID-19 and for health care workers. We will lift up those who are struggling with isolation and depression, those who have lost their jobs, those who have become victims of abuse, and those who do not have a safe home in which to shelter.

We have an opportunity to be powerful witnesses in the coming days. Right now, making connections is one of the most important actions we can take. As we pray, we ask God to open our eyes to needs and ways in which we can respond generously and appropriately. We draw strength from each other and are fed by those who share their journeys of faith. We stay strong and we encourage our friends, our family members and even those we have never met.

Just like the disciples, we are called to go into all the world with a message of great hope.

I urge you to remember the promises of God who loves us and who, by His grace, encourages and strengthens us.

**Amen.**