

Dear loved ones,

I thought it best to take a moment and address y'all because you have been on my mind more than usual as of late. First, let me say that Dawn and I love you very much and we pray that God will continue to bless you, especially during this time of crisis that seems to have gripped our world.

We have seen God do some exciting and extraordinary things in our church over the last, nearly eight years, that I have had the privilege of being your pastor. We have seen Him guide us through many changes and add to our numbers those upon whom we can lavish His love and share in the joy of a relationship with Jesus. We have seen a great number baptized and so very many grow in their walk with the Lord that I get excited all over again just recollecting in my mind all that God has done while I write this to you.

So, I just want to encourage you to not give in to the fear and hysteria that is prevalent in the media and our communities. Our President and his administration are doing all they can to get us through this unprecedented moment in history. I have been praying for him and those who truly have the interest of our nation in their hearts and I hope that you will join me in prayer for him.

Having said that, I want to remind you that as followers of Jesus Christ we have an enemy and that enemy's domain is this world. Fear, panic, and lack of trust and faith in God are what he deals in daily.

Do not give in to the fear and the panic that the enemy is generating through those who deny God and promote Satan's agenda.

Psalm 46:2 reminds us, *Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea.*

God's presence is always with us and I just encourage you to draw near to Him. Practice being in the presence of God moment by moment and day by day.

Remember what God said through the prophet Isaiah, *So, do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.* (Isaiah 41:10)

Remember, these things should come to pass for the day draws nigh when the Lord shall return. The further we move away from creation's start the worse this world seems to become.

I have found that the further time moves us away from the cross of Calvary the less people believe in the return of Jesus, but rest assured the day is approaching and it would seem in moments such as these that it is approaching faster than maybe we realize.

Let your love for Jesus Christ drive out the fear and let the love Jesus has for you be a comfort and a reminder that He is with you. 1 John 4:18 reminds us that His love drives out fear.

I am certainly not suggesting that you should not exercise caution and concern.

Be diligent in how you conduct your lives. Be safe and use common sense. There are those of you who are compromised by physical conditions and others of you whose age make you more susceptible in this crisis so use good judgement in when and where you go and with whom you socialize with during this time of crisis.

What I am absolutely convinced of is that God is still on the throne. This is not a surprise to Him. And He didn't bring us this far to leave us to flounder in fear, but has empowered us with His presence to drive out and overcome fear.

There may have to be some adjustments to how we conduct church services during this crisis. I know I have had to adjust my hospital calling criteria and everyone seems hesitant to be amongst other folks. I understand the concern, but do not let this become an excuse for simply retreating from life and faith. Satan loves to isolate God's flock. It makes it easier for him to attack those that follow the Lord.

This crisis will pass, and we can come out the other side stronger in our faith in God and closer in our relationships with each other. And while toilet paper may have gone up in value in the eyes of many (eye roll inserted here) the phone is still an easy way to reach out and fellowship. So, text with each other and talk to each other via the phone. This is an opportunity to learn what that Face Time app really does. Please know that Dawn and I love you all and that the leadership of the Aulne Church is wrestling with how we can best minister, care and protect each of you that God has blessed us with. This will pass and then I suggest a big pot to celebrate.

With His love,

Pastor Jeff