



St. John's Evangelical Church

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www.stjohnskenton.org

01 April 2020

Greetings to my beloved St. John's family:

“²Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. ³I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. ⁴As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy. ⁵I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well. ⁶For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, ⁷for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control” (**II Timothy 1:2-7**).

Given the date, in most years, you might think this to be a practical joke, but we face a serious health crisis and our response needs to be equally grave. Last night, I met with the church Council, and we made the decision to keep St. John's closed through the month of April. The early Church often met in small groups. In some ways, we are returning to these roots, but at least now we have many options that keep us connected.

Closing the church for this month means there will be no physical gathering of the church members—even on Easter Sunday. We prayerfully considered various options, but we decided it was best to continue offering our services online. All it takes is one person to get out of their car—as well intentioned as they may be—and all the measures we take to ensure people's safety would be for naught. There are other issues like restroom facilities and keeping families confined to cars that went into the decision making. Again, this was done giving proper weight to several factors.

While we encourage our people to stay home in small groups and worship online with us starting at 8:30 AM on Easter Sunday, the Ministerial Association is hosting a service at 10:30 at the local drive-in. Factors limit who can participate from leading the worship, but I will send a note of encouragement to be shared by Dave Dooley, the speaker for the day. There is also a space limit and there will be no facilities available so plan accordingly if you go.

I thought Paul's words from **II Timothy** above are appropriate for these days. I long to see you, and I know many tears have been shed in these times. I know of your sincere faith, and I long to be in your presence. While the steps we are taking keep us physically separated, we are not acting out of fear. Rather, we are acting in prudence with love and self-control. Even in these days, we can demonstrate the power of God at work within us.

Again, our Sunday services will begin being broadcast at 8:30 AM each week in April. Additionally, I will provide a short message on Facebook live at 7 PM on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. Both evenings, the Passion Play from a previous year will be broadcast at 8 PM. Also, if you have some bread and juice, you can participate with me in Communion on Maundy Thursday.

While we are apart from one another, the work of the church is continuing. Feel free to reach out for how you may be involved in the church or community efforts. I am thankful for the Care Team and their ongoing efforts. You may continue to support the church through your tithes and donations. You may mail checks to the church at 211 E. Carrol St., Kenton, OH 43326. You can drop donations off at the office also, which will go directly into the church's new safe.

Like Paul, I want to encourage you to fan into flame the gift of God that is within you. I try to post prayers four-five times per week on our Facebook page. I know everyone is not online or utilizes Facebook. If someone could help with uploading to other platforms or sharing in other manners, please contact us to help make that happen. Even if you are not connected in those ways, I hope you are reading more scripture, praying more often, and connecting through calls to friends. You may always reach me at 724-290-3651.

I am here to support you and care for you as is your church family. Our plans for this year have been upended but we will continue to serve the Lord. When the time comes, we will gather once again and move forward as the family of God to share His love for the world.

Keep praying. Keep faithful. Keep serving.

Grace and peace,

Pastor Randall