

Dear Family and Friends of Mars UP Church:

WORSHIP UPDATE – It was great to see more faces this past Easter Sunday. At one point, there were forty-two “connections.” That means that (perhaps) as many as fifty were there for worship. Of course, that’s not our normal Easter attendance, but things are not normal. Many thanks to John Ivory’s brother Bob for installing sound equipment in Jamie’s living room – she sounded great. Thanks also to Alma Staskiewicz for doing the Power Point slides to assist. This is new for all of us, but we are making progress (I don’t think I will ever get used to preaching from a chair!)

Things have settled down somewhat, so Session is now meeting every two weeks instead of weekly. But your leaders are still in touch with each other and monitoring external events. No one knows when things will change – I pray daily for a return to normal worship.

As I made phone calls this past week, I was heartened and encouraged by the overwhelming faith and patience from the Mars family. Indeed, things are difficult, but everyone has hope for the future, and for the provision of Christ. As often happens, you are ministering to your minister, instead of the other way around.

Make a phone call to someone whose voice you haven’t heard lately. This act of kindness will benefit you both.

I ANXIOUSLY AWAIT our return to worship!

Pastor Jim

As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. (John 9:1-3).

Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? (Romans 11:34)

If you are like me, sometimes you find yourself asking, “Why is all this happening? Why did God allow this virus to spread? What did we do to deserve this?”

Without taking up too many pages, today we are encountering the eternal question of *theodicy*, which is “...the answer to the question of why God permits evil.” If God is all good, and if God is all powerful, why is there evil (and why does God allow evil)?

A few weeks ago, I preached from John 9, the account of the man born blind. The disciples (and the theology of the day) wanted to blame the man or his parents, but Jesus replied the man was born blind to display the works of God.

As we move through this terrible time of struggle and loss, let us be encouraged by stories of bravery and kindness. We no longer take things for granted, and we cherish seeing faces on a screen or hearing someone’s voice on the phone! Yes, we all miss contact with our families, but we do this so stay safe.

April 14, 2020

As Paul reminds us, no one knows the mind of the Lord. No matter what we might think, no one is in a position to offer an explanation as to WHY this all is happening. But the thing we DO know is that God is in charge, God has allowed this to happen (for whatever reason!), and God wins in the end.

Millions are using their faith and hearts to sustain others, thousands of scientists are using their God-given brains to find solutions to this crisis, and (hopefully!) our leaders are turning to God for counsel and guidance to lead us out of this mess.

I had a Seminary professor who used to speak of “...looking over the abyss into mystery.” We are in the middle of a mystery – let us remain faithful, and let us look to God.

In Christ,

Pastor Jim