



April 2, 2020

Dear Bethany Family,

It's hard to believe the last time we were together in a service was three weeks ago. I miss seeing you regularly, hearing your voices in worship, spending time together in between services, and sharing a handshake or a hug. How quickly things have changed. Each day seems to bring it's own challenges as we begin to settle into a new normal. I hold in tension the deep desire to be reunited and the longing to see this time away be formative for our faith and transformative for our lives. My prayer is that when we come back together, we will do so with greater clarity of the things that matter most and a willingness to follow God wherever He would take us next.

When we first announced the suspension of services, it was prior to California's "Safer at Home" Order. Since then, we have been instructed to avoid all public gatherings and to remain home except for essential needs (medical, food, etc.) through April 19, 2020. **In light of that order, we will not plan to gather for services in our church building until after April 19**, or until new information becomes available. However, we will continue to gather online each Sunday for our 9 AM live stream services on Facebook, during which you can connect and interact with others in real time. We will also continue to provide other ways to connect with our staff, through devotions, other videos, and regular updates on when we will resume weekly gatherings on campus. You can find all of these on our regularly updated [Resource Page](#).

I'll be the first to admit that it's strange to think of our Easter series while knowing we won't be together. This year we will be looking at three central themes in the Gospel of John that highlight different aspects of Jesus' character and ministry. The series is titled:

### *Light, Love, Life*

*Easter is a reminder that in the darkness of this world there is light.  
Easter is a reminder that no matter what we have experienced we are loved.  
Easter is a reminder that God can bring the dead to life.*

In one sense, we'll have a better understanding of how the disciples might have felt that first Easter. They were hunkered down in a houses, fearful of those who might try to kill them because they were followers of Jesus, waiting for the hope of a resurrected Savior. Similarly, we find ourselves in our homes, gathered and waiting for the hope of our redemption.

Here are a couple of things to help you prepare for the next few weeks as we continue to live-stream our services:

**Sunday, April 5 | Palm Sunday | 9 AM** I invite you to participate online with us as we begin our Easter series. Later that evening, we will be also be live streaming our **Time of Prayer at 6:30 PM**. During this 30 minute service, we will pray for our families, our communities and churches; we will also have a special time to pray for each other through prayer requests, which you can post in real time in the comment thread. We hope you will join in this prayer time.

**Friday, April 10 | Good Friday | 6:30 PM** This evening will be a poignant way to remember Christ's sacrifice on our behalf. During this service, we will participate in communion together (a separate email will be sent with more information on how you can prepare.) It will be a unique experience but one that I believe will be truly special, given our circumstances.

**Sunday, April 12 | Easter | 9 AM** We have so much to celebrate, and we will do so through our live-stream service at 9:00 AM. We encourage you to invite your neighbors and friends to visit our Facebook page and join us as we consider what it means to have a living Savior. Take this opportunity to share Light in this time of darkness.

As is our tradition, we will take a special **Easter offering** through April 12. In light of the current worldwide pandemic, we will direct our Easter offerings to support local and global ministry partners on the front lines, including:

- **Long Beach Rescue Mission**, who has already seen meal services double and who have increased sanitation costs as they serve people in our city who are hurting and experiencing homelessness.
- **Missionary partners** around the world, including Paul & Tania Steer in Honduras, who are serving communities in desperate need of support because of food shortages.

If you would like to donate above and beyond your regular giving to our Easter offering, you can mail a check to the church office with "Easter" in the memo, you can [give online](#) and in the pull-down menu choose the fund "Easter", or you can text a dollar amount & Easter to 562-203-3303.

**Giving Update** I want to personally thank those of you who continue to support the ministry of Bethany Church during these difficult times. We have seen God move mountains in our past and I completely trust that we will see Him do it again. We have also seen the way He has grown and stretched us, both corporately and individually, through difficult times. This time is no different. God will make a way. As is our typical weekly practice, I wanted to give you an update on our giving over the past few weeks, since we have been apart.

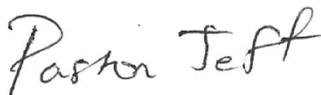
Our budgeted weekly need is \$27,981

- Sunday, March 8 \$25,658 (in service)
- Sunday March 15 \$17,844 (live stream)
- Sunday March 22 \$20,876 (live stream)
- Sunday March 29 \$22,591 (live stream)
- Total behind budget \$20,276 as of March 30, 2020

Whether we are within the walls of the church or within the walls of our homes, giving is one way that we express worship to our Creator God, who has provided for us in every way. If you call Bethany home, I encourage you to continue the practice of faithful giving. It is easy to [give online](#) or by texting. However, if you would prefer, we would be happy to mail you envelopes to make it easier for you. If you'd like that, please email us at [info@bethanylb.org](mailto:info@bethanylb.org) with the subject "Giving Envelopes" and we can work with you on that.

I'm proud of you as a church and am so thankful to be able to walk this process with you. I've been encouraged by the generosity and thoughtfulness of so many and how devoted you are to supporting one another in these uncertain times. God is faithful. He will not fail us nor forsake us.

Grace,



Pastor Jeff Levine