



# The River

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER | MAY 2020

## Greetings in the midst of Safe Distancing

As I set down to write this article, we have been in ‘Stay at Home’ and ‘Safe Distancing’ for right at 8 weeks (2 months). I am sure that most of you would love to see some sense of normal return.

But this begs the question as to, What is normal? And do we want to really return to the normal we knew before February?

Pre February normal saw the majority of people taking so much of life taken for granted. While staying home, we have found that we can survive without restaurants, movie theaters, and even hair salon’s. We have seen the value of family, gained new respect for the healthcare industry, and know that our faith can see us through.

Friday May 8<sup>th</sup>, starts the first phase of NC opening back up to an semblance of normal. This comes as Rowan County announces a big increase in positive COVID 19 cases. 76 new cases in the past 7 days; these are the non care facility cases.

Do we dare to take so much for granted in the future? I predict that we will all be a little more cautious in the months and even years to come.

We are looking to move toward doing drive in worship starting May 10<sup>th</sup>. This is the first step we are taking in an attempt to restore in person worship. However as more phases of the State plan come into effect over the next several months we will be looking at what we will need to do to have in person group worship. Some of the things that we would expect to see is the use of masks, frequent hand sanitizing, and extensive detailed cleaning of the building. I also will not be surprised to see those with compromised Immune systems staying away from church even longer than most.

I wander how many of us have used some of this time to grow our faith. We have waited: waited in hope (we hoped that we would not get sick and that we would have enough food and supplies); we waited to see what would happen next. Does any of this remind you of the Nation of Israel? They waited for 400 years to be rescued from slavery and persecution, they waited for 40 days while Moses was up on Mount Sini, they waited in the desert 40

years to enter the 'Promised Land'. Jesus also spent 40 days in the wilderness as He prepared to begin His 3 years of ministry.

I have thought, sought and collaborated on ways to keep all of you involved and active in the ministry of the church. Many of us have gained knowledge in technology and how to use it to stay connected. I can't even begin to calculate how many hours Cindy has spent researching Internet platforms and programs to enhance our connections. Tim & Susannah Kelty have used technology to keep their mid-week Bible Studies going. Susan Cobb has explored the possibility and found that her study of the Screwtape Letters was not conducive at this time to utilize the internet. Randy Ward recently started to have a Sunday School study. This has taken us to uncharted ground and forced us to be flexible and learn new ways. All of this has taken place while many churches have not adjusted.

I believe that if we really look seeking to find God in the midst of this, we will God turning the bad in this storm into opportunities of good. Studies have showed that more people today have turned to religious (faith based) broadcasts and posts than in the history of the internet. In some part this may be in part to the anonymous aspect of online searching, but there are those who are scared and earnestly seeking answers and peace.

May we continue strong in our faith and look to see God in the midst of the storms.

Peace & Blessings

AJ