



ALCB

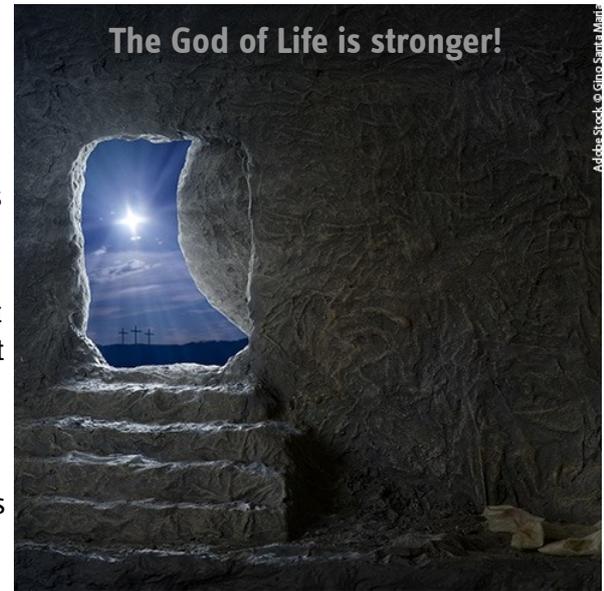
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# In Touch

ALL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF BRUSSELS

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

We currently live in strange times. Some governments in the EU say it is the most difficult situation since World War II. The so-called “Corona-Virus” has a lock on the world. The news and perspectives have changed amazingly. Some important issues which have always been on top seem to have vanished: refugees at our borders and how we treat them, war in Syria and the Ukraine, the situation in Iran and the Middle East, the climate change process and so on. Not to mention the issues and challenges the media usually don’t or just rarely mention, first of all the situation of our persecuted Christian brothers and sisters. Every nation is busy with itself and the cooperation of international communities sadly seems to be limited and bumpy. Life everywhere is “locked down”. The very important things for life are still available: groceries, pharmacies, Amazon. – But church? Long ago the churches have lost their “system-relevant position”. Of course it is correct to follow the regulations and to minimise the opportunities for the virus to infect others. It is correct when the churches say it is a question of loving my neighbour and solidarity to respect the rules and not to meet. But how is it with me and my personal belief? Do I miss church? How do I deal with this situation? Is my faith and spirituality also “locked down”? – In the USA some evangelical groups proclaim that Corona is a punishment from God. I would be very careful with such ideas. In my opinion Corona is “just” one more sign of the fallen creation. This world is not in order. And it was and is a treacherous opinion to believe everything will always get better. No, the Bible is clear: the world steers itself towards a catastrophe. The question is: How do I deal with it? To hide myself and to cut all contacts to the world or to become totally desperate is as wrong as to turn the rescue of the world into my religion and my false god. We still live in God’s creation, commissioned to take care of it (but held in life and preserved by God in heaven and never by us!) as good as possible and with the promise of God “while the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.” (Genesis 8, 22) This means: there will be life and a future for us and the world in this world beyond Corona. And when the last of all days has come, everything else – may it be the economy, the situation of the EU, or the climate – won’t matter anymore. Then it will only be important if we kept the faith. – In these days, we face the end and climax of the Passion: Palm Sunday, the Holy Week, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and then Easter. I am sure that this Lent season was a real “passion” for



many people. Let us especially this year bear in mind that the time of Lent is a time for repentance, to take a halt in my life routines (it was never easier than now), and to think about the really necessary things in life, and to turn back to God. And have in mind: there will be an Easter celebration one day! No Corona, no passion, no “hell, death, and devil” (as Martin Luther often summarised all evil) can divide us from the living God who overcame the grave. The message of Easter is that life has already overcome death. In and with Jesus Christ we have a future in a world to come without Corona & Co. I wish and pray that you will keep this faith, also in these difficult times, the only “system relevant” thing of your life.

Stay blessed,

*+ Yours Pastor Johannes*



**Thoughts on the Sundays by e-mail are available and online services via “Zoom” for the coming feasts are in planning. Please check your e-mail for invitation or contact the pastor if you are not on the membership list but also would like to participate.**

**Evangelisch-Lutherse Kerk in België – All Lutheran Church of Brussels**

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## Financial Update—News from the ALCB Church Board

Without services we have less expenses: no rent for the church building, no fee for the organ player, also no travel expenses. But we also have much less donations because many people usually put their donations for the church in the offering during the services. But besides the fact that the last months we always had to spend more money than we received, the congregation has to pay the pastor. And the monthly donations transferred to the account by some few ALCB members aren't sufficient for that. The Church Board together with President van Hattem discussed to cut the honorarium for the pastor to 50% but refused this idea. The opinion was that the pastor already gets much less than a usual pastor's salary and that his work still goes on. Therefore, the Church Board asks the members of ALCB to give their offerings at least momentarily by a regular transfer to the church account, maybe monthly or weekly, like a "real" offering during the service to have enough money to pay the pastor.



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**Our church members  
with birthday in April:**

☪ 4.4. Mrs Shoo

☪ 22.4. Astrid



*Your birthday is missing?  
This may be because the church doesn't have your data. In this case please contact the pastor and let him know! The pastor is still busy revising the membership list.*

**Please pray for...**

...that the pandemic will stop and for healing of the world.

...for all the sick and dying.

...for all the faithful that they will keep their faith of salvation even without public worship services.

...for all nurses, doctors, scientists, emergency helpers, and all who have to take decisions.

...for all who are not in focus at the moment but need much help: the poor and homeless, the old people, the refugees, the victims of abuse and violence, the lonely.

...our persecuted Brothers and Sisters in Christ.



## Focus on liturgy: Hymns and Prayer(s)

In our series about the particular items of the liturgy we already covered almost all parts except the liturgy of the Sacraments (Baptism, Holy Communion, Absolution). Just three parts of the "common" service are missing: the Prayer of the Church (called Intercessions), the hymns, and the Blessing. The Blessing will be the subject next month. This time we will focus on the moments when the congregation is especially active. The Intercessions are the moment when the direction of talking is changing explicitly: now the congregation is speaking to God and God is listening. Now we bring everything before Him what we have on our minds. Martin Luther said that worship service "is nothing else than that God speaks to us by His word and we answer Him in prayer and hymns." So, the Intercessions belong to the very core of the service. It is our answer to God. When we listen to God's word in the readings and the sermon and pray and sing to God it is a full service. Usually the pastor or somebody else prepares the Intercessions. But it is also possible to have "free prayer" and everyone can contribute a petition spontaneously. Often the congregation confirms the particular petitions with an answer like "Amen" or "Lord, have mercy." Traditionally, (normally) the Intercessions contain a petition for the sick and the dying and today more and more often for the persecuted Christians. The other part according to Martin Luther are the hymns. The hymns fill the liturgy. They make the service lively. With hymns we foremost praise God, or we pray to Him or sometimes we also lament. Hymns also tell or affirm the content of the readings and the sermon. With hymns we sing comfort and the message of the Gospel to each other. It is a common Christian tradition to sing since the beginning of the Church. But especially the Reformation intensified this character. The Reformation became a singing movement which hasn't stopped composing new, great hymns and songs until today. Alone Martin Luther composed at least 35 hymns – and he just started composing hymns when he was 40 years old! We could say that singing (and church music) is part of our Lutheran DNA. By the way: the first hymn (a ballad) Martin Luther composed on the occasion of the martyrdom of Johann van Eschen and Hendrijk Voes, two Augustinian monks from Antwerp who were burned on the Grand Place in Brussels on July 1st 1523. Therewith they became the first martyrs of the Reformation.