



ALCB

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In Touch

ALL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF BRUSSELS

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

"Spring makes everything young again except man.", says a quote by US scientist Charles Francis Richter (1900-1985), the inventor of the "Richter scale" to range the strength of earthquakes. In German a proverb says likewise "Spring makes everything new", which is taken from a 19th-century-popular song "[The month of] May makes everything new, makes the soul fresh and free". - The month May became the epitome of spring, new life, blooming mood, fresh and positive thoughts - we call this "spring fever". This year, it is a kind of bitter-sweet melange. The joyful spring fever has to cope with confinement, masks, and hand disinfection. It is difficult to let the fresh spring breeze into locked rooms. - Next to all spring fever we realise with each year of increasing age that the nature may be made



young again in spring but we weren't, especially this year, threatened by a virus and all the uncomfortable consequences. Is that a depressive thought for us? Lifetime is running. Chances run away, some used, but often many unused. Recently I read a prayer for the end of the day which brought interesting thoughts to me: *"...The day has gone, O Savior, and I am closer to Your hour when I shall see You face-to-face..."* [Lutheran Book of Prayer. Saint Louis 2005. page 21] Each new spring could be just a reminder for us that we are getting older and weaker, or it could be a reminder of the Creator and Preserver, our Lord and God in heaven, who creates each day and preserves our lives and leads us. It is a reminder that God will also create a new world full of spring and in this world it says "God makes everything new - also man." Each day is a day closer to God. This is an amazing, wonderful thought which is much better than any spring fever. And it doesn't matter what this day will bring, if chances were used or not, if it was a good or a bad day. The only thing which matters is whether I've clung to Him this day, who has everything in His hands: *"O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; for his steadfast love endures forever."* (Psalm 118, 29)
+ Yours Pastor Johannes



Internet Services & More

After a few weeks of orientation after the beginning of the "lockdown" and some written offers, we started to use the video-chat provider "Zoom" for weekly services and since three weeks ago also for additional Evening Prayers on Wednesday. We can be very thankful for the new media and opportunities. Most members of the congregation have already participated at least once, many regularly, and we reach every Sunday between 15 and 20 people with the internet service. We also celebrated a service on Maundy Thursday for the first time in ALCB history. Some technical aspects still must be trained a bit and the limits are obvious (singing together for example is not possible because of the time delay), so it will never replace a "real" service with community in one room, but it is a good opportunity to keep and train our faith in these difficult times. If you haven't joined yet, try it out and meet your brothers and sisters in Christ! **Sunday services at 17:00 and Wednesday Evening Prayers at 19:30!** You just need the invitation link from the Pastor by e-mail. If you're not on the ALCB distribution list please contact the Pastor.



Please pray for...

- ...all doctors, nurses, scientists, and all who work against the pandemic that they will have enough power for their work and good ideas to fight the virus.
- ...all who care for our everyday needs, like producers of food, postmen, workers in groceries, logistics etc.
- ...sufficient rain after weeks of drought, the growing of the crops, the farmers, and the nature under pressure.
- ...for all of us who have problems to deal with the confinement, especially for the lonely and the children and the victims of violence in their homes.



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

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Financial Update

Last month we had to ask you for offerings via bank transfer because there was no opportunity to give offerings in the services. We are very thankful and glad that several members of ALCB responded to this call and contributed their offerings via transfer to the church account. This helps a lot and ensures the work of the church also in times of confinement. For April we had enough money for all expenses. The first time since months that ALCB was not in the red! Thank you for all your generosity!

The Church Board also decided that it is worth to pay a bit more for our website than in the past to have more technical opportunities and to subscribe for a whole year to the video-chat provider "Zoom" we've been using for our internet services for about one month now. A one-year-subscription is cheaper than one on a monthly basis.

Please consider also in May to give your offerings via bank transfer to our account.

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Our church members with birthday in April:

- ☞ 4.5. Boris
- ☞ 12.5. Anetta
- ☞ 17.5. Julianna
- ☞ 28.5. Levente

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.



Bible Study Group

For a long time we've been talking about starting a new Bible Study Group. Now, with the new possibilities of "Zoom", I invite you to the first "digital" Bible Study Group via Zoom, **Wednesdays** after the Evening Prayer at **20:10, starting Wednesday, 27 May**. To keep it technically simple there will be just one session and invitation link for the Prayer and the Group which doesn't mean that you are forced to join the prayer if you just want to join the Study Group. You can just step in later. The subject of the first session will be "Prayer". For the next sessions we could discuss the subjects in the group. If you are interested come and join us whenever you like!

Confinement extended – Church is still alive and working – next service in church probably 14 June

The Belgian authorities decided just a few changes in the lockdown measures for the following weeks. For the time being, services in church are not allowed until at least 8 June. This means that we also can't celebrate Pentecost and Holy Trinity together in the church. This is really sad, not least because this means another four Sundays without Holy Communion. But this doesn't mean that the Church doesn't act. Besides the already mentioned internet services, the Pastor is happy to have a chat via e-mail, phone, or video with you. There might be cases when a visit at home could be possible as well. Please don't hesitate to contact the Pastor if you would like to talk to him.

Focus on liturgy: the Blessing

Before we proceed to the special parts of the liturgy of the Sacraments, we focus on the last part of the service: the Blessing. It seems to be just a very short, little part, for some maybe the longed-for "redemption" after a too long service. But it is one of the most important moments during the liturgy (if there are more important and less important parts in the liturgy at all). I have heard a few times of old people who had already problems to hear the words in church or to follow the liturgy but they went to church anyway. Why? They said to receive the Blessing. Commonly, we think that the blessing is a kind of "good wish" and among Christians we sometimes also use it as a "good wish" at the end of e-mails. But is this an adequate use of the blessing? Yes, of course we can and should bless each other, but it is much more than that and we should have in mind the power of it and what we do when we bless someone. We direct and command him/her in the presence of God. To show what the Blessing means we can take a view on the story of Father Jacob in the Bible (book of Genesis, chapter 25, from verse 19 on). The blessing of God is more than just a good wish. It is the strong, almighty word of God's mouth which has the power to create out of nothing. Martin Luther called it "Tätelwort", a word newly invented by him, in English something like "act-word". It is the same power and "act-word" which also makes you pure, reborn, and a child of God in the Holy Baptism, forgiven in the Holy Absolution, and the body and blood of our Lord with and under bread and vine in the Holy Communion. In the amazing and odd story about the wrestle between Jacob and God in Genesis 32, 23-33 we learn that the blessing of God may leave you marked: Jacob was limping since this moment. The blessing of God marks you, changes you, and gives you a part of God's strength. It is much more than a wish. But it is also no magical spell which preserves you against all affliction in your life. It is the acceptance and promise that God is by your side in your life. This changes you, your thoughts, your behaviour and directs you to God out of His great mercy. Be blessed!