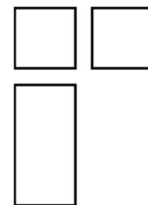


DER LANDESBISCHOF
DER EVANGELISCH-LUTHERISCHEN KIRCHE IN BAYERN
Dr. Heinrich Bedford-Strohm



Easter 2020

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Given the unprecedented circumstances in which we are celebrating Easter this year, it is my deep conviction that we need to hear such intimate words of address with which I have been so bold as to begin this Easter Letter to all our members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria. "Christ is Risen!" This is the Good News which we proclaim today and every year on Easter Sunday. This year we cannot worship together in person. It hurts terribly to not be able to celebrate what we know and love in the festive Easter services in our churches. However, it is necessary to refrain from gathering, so that we do not risk harming the life and limb of our most vulnerable members. To gather for Easter Services would be to invalidate our own message.

This does not take anything away from the joy of Easter - on the contrary! Many are now experiencing that, even under these unprecedented circumstances, we can still celebrate Easter joyously: Because throughout this country we are experiencing a plethora of new, creative possibilities for communication, contact, and Christian fellowship without risk of infection, which is joyous! And most especially because the Good News of Easter has never been spoken in a more timely manner than to us at this very moment in this universal situation, in which many are fearful or feel that their economic existence is threatened. All of this will not be wiped away. There is no Easter without Good Friday. The joy of Easter is not a joy that intends to simply block out the suffering and pain of our lives for a few days. Rather, Easter Joy is so profound because it not only knows all about our fears, our pain and our death - but it also knows all about Christ's victory over them.

This Easter the story of two of Jesus' disciples on their way to Emmaus has become especially important to me. After Jesus' crucifixion and the disturbing news of the empty tomb, these two disciples leave Jerusalem and head for Emmaus. Just like now, they walk only in twos. Their world has crumbled. What life will look like after the catastrophe is completely uncertain. Will things ever be the same again? They don't know. Suddenly a third person appears, someone who apparently does not know the rules of social distancing, who asks questions and listens before speaking. Later, the two will say that their hearts were "on fire" when he was present. They do not recognize Jesus, they do not see who he is, but they feel that through him God

Büro des Landesbischofs
Katharina-von-Bora-Straße 7-13, 80333 München
Telefon: 089 / 55 95 - 201
Telefax: 089 / 55 95 - 8484
E-Mail: landesbischof@elkb.de

is at their side. And then they realize: Jesus, who was nailed to the cross and sentenced to the ultimate Social Distancing – Death – is alive and is with them!

My personal wish for you this Eastertide in 2020 – an Easter which we will certainly never forget – is that you may feel the presence of the Risen One with you, just as the Emmaus disciples did. Perhaps you can simply light a candle and contemplate its radiance. The light of Easter reminds us in a sensual way of God's love, which is stronger than all restrictions upon social contact between us. And it finds expression in so many gestures of love that we are giving to each other now.

All these signs of love that people are showing to each other in our country and throughout the world right now enable me to feel confident that, when this crisis is over, we will not be weaker, but stronger. In faith, hope and love we proclaim to one another: Christ is risen!

Yours in Christ



Dr. Heinrich Bedford-Strohm
Landesbischof

