

Prayer Letter – March 2020

*The LORD is my light and my salvation—
whom shall I fear?*

*The LORD is the stronghold of my life—
of whom shall I be afraid?*

Psalm 27:1

One day, King Saul's soldiers fought against the Philistines. Goliath challenged them to a fight. In a short time, Saul's soldiers knew everything about their opponent and their fear grew. They lost the spirit of fighting and gave up, hiding in the caves. The situation changed when David appeared: he didn't calculate his opponent's virtues, but instead, set his eyes on the prize, taking courage from his former experiences when God helped him fight a lion and a bear. Because of that, He trusted the Lord in this situation as well. Tests of faith are so important in order to persevere in times of difficulty.

It's apparent that some people have learned more about COVID-19 in 10 days than about Jesus Christ after coming to church for 10 years. I am sure it has a lot to do with their personal relationship with Him. Our task is to encourage everyone – the weak and the strong in faith – to spend more time reading the Bible, having quality time with their loved ones, performing their daily duties, catching up on work, and reading good books rather than watching TV which bombards us with the daily sad updates on COVID-19's toll.

We try to be careful and encourage people to follow the official guidelines, but also to trust in the Lord, who is our refuge, and not lose hope. As believers, we want to remember that God works all things for our good (Rom. 8:28)! We want to seek His will and wisdom when sharing the Gospel in individual conversations in our households. We have the opportunity to give out copies of the New Testament in shops and at work claiming that we possess the best vaccine against the pandemic of fear caused by the virus. All people accept our gifts with gratitude. We also hand out the latest tract entitled "What do you fear." For obvious reasons, we are not allowed to organize street evangelism or church meetings, but we do evangelize on a one-to-one basis.

Although coronavirus has affected the church as a fellowship of people, we have found many ways to encourage one another and share the Gospel. In the time when the whole world has paused, family has gained more recognition – so has the church family: we call and pray for one another and keep in touch via WhatsApp. We intend to try out the Zoom app to conduct a Bible study where people can see and hear each other.

Many people outside of church are really scared and need uplifting. For them, we have started a project "Life is more..." available on our county's website by clicking the tab "Where are you heading?" On there, people can find answers to questions about the meaning and purpose of life, what happens after death, how

we know that God exists, why Jesus came to this world, what the Gospel is, and many more.

In the last week, we have noted nearly 2000 visits to our church website while the number of people reading our articles has tripled. We can see this is a good time to spread the Gospel. Moreover, we have decided to meet in a group of max 5 people (as per the guidelines) in order to record and live-stream online services and Bible studies. There are usually 70-80 people streaming live, but after two days we can see over 2500 views; 200-400 people listen to our sermons on YouTube.

The next step for us is to figure out how to invite those anonymous listeners to church once the pandemic is over, though we know some, who share their identity, are from our area. We pray for the Lord's guidance in this subject.

We pray for those church members, and their families, who are key workers: health service workers, trade and delivery drivers whose work sustains our economy. Those are the heroes of faith of our times who work for the good of us all while taking every safety measure. Someone has to take a risk so that others can stay safe at home. We respect and pray for those people; sometimes even, when an ambulance drives by, people look out of their windows or stop in the streets to clap and show their respect.

Our church elders and deacons have focused on supporting the elderly and the most vulnerable in our church and neighborhoods: we do their shopping and help with using the Internet, taking every precaution, when they want to stream our services.

I think it's fair to say we are experiencing a pandemic of fear and egoism. Many people need reassurance and hope in such – what would seem as hopeless – times, and love when others seem to care only for themselves. We want to be light and salt to them. If the light of the church dies, darkness will come. If the salt loses its savor, everything will become deprived of the flavor of the Gospel. Therefore, we do what we can, within what's allowed, to spread hope and the message of new life in Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, we have heard of some people who have committed suicide due to the pressure of present times. In the nearby town, a whole family committed suicide which shocked us. We ask the Lord to help us reach the weak who can't handle the fear. So far, we have been able to do that using the tract "What do you fear?"

We have more and more restrictions, e.g. we can only go out to do essential shopping like food, medicine and toiletries; only max two people are allowed out together; the underaged are not allowed out without a parent, even in a superstore. We are not permitted to do sports outside or ride a bike, however, we can walk our dogs.

I've heard a funny story: in a block of flats, there are many families but only one of them has a dog. That family lets others take their dog for a walk so that people can have an excuse to go out in pairs. I can imagine the dog must be fed up by

now. Humor is a typical response to stress and difficulties among the Polish people.

Initial guidelines say that at the beginning of May the restrictions to do with going outside should be lifted. In June, things should be more available, but rules on cleanliness and disinfecting will still have to be adhered to. So far, there have been over 4000 people infected by Covid-19 in Poland (April 6th). Some say it will peak next week. Our government was very quick to close the borders and introduce quarantine when we only had 1 person infected. That is why there haven't been that many cases here. However, we can't foresee what will happen in two weeks' time.

It's apparent many people are seeking God at this time. We fear, however, that when the pandemic is over, they will be preoccupied with improving their material situation and looking or migrating for work. We anticipate difficult times for the church to share spiritual values because people will concentrate on their security and making up for losses.

We ask for your prayers. We are glad that for the time being, we don't have to cancel our mutual plans for June 2020. We trust all is in God's hands. He said He'd be with us till the end of the world. Therefore, we are to do our work and He will do His.

May the Lord bless you. Thank you for all your prayers and support.
Tomasz & Kamilla