

SCHMIEDELEUT I KONFERENZ DER HUTTERISCHEN GEMEINDEN
Acadia-Gemeinde • Box 1160 • Carberry, Manitoba • R0K 0H0

April 6, 2020

Dear brothers and sisters,

Der Herr segne und behüte euch an Leib und an der Seele in diesen gefährlichen Zeiten.

As we mark the beginning of *die Heilige Woche*, we feel the need to send you a letter of encouragement amid strange and unusual times. Hopefully, it will also provide clarity regarding our Easter observances for this year. The church letter dated March 24, and sent to all Hutterite communities in hope of encouraging a united response, is still a good guideline that remains in effect. We remind you that leaders are accountable to the church for their actions; let every community work hard to ensure the safety of their most vulnerable members.

In the letter to the Ephesians, Paul prays that the church in Ephesus might fully understand the source of Christian hope, namely the resurrection of Jesus:

Der Gott unsers HERRN Jesus Christi, der Vater der Herrlichkeit, gebe euch den Geist der Weisheit und der Offenbarung zu seiner selbst Erkenntnis und erleuchtete Augen eures Verständnisses, dass ihr erkennen möget, welche da sei die Hoffnung eurer Berufung, und welcher sei der Reichtum seines herrlichen Erbes bei seinen Heiligen, und welche da sei die überschwängliche Größe seiner Kraft an uns, die wir glauben nach der Wirkung seiner mächtigen Stärke.

[Gott hat seine Stärke] gewirkt in Christo, da er ihn von den Toten auferweckt hat und gesetzt zu seiner Rechten im Himmel über alle Fürstentümer, Gewalt, Macht, Herrschaft und alles, was genannt mag werden, nicht allein auf dieser Welt, sondern auch in der zukünftigen; und hat alle Dinge unter seine Füße getan und hat ihn gesetzt zum Haupt der Gemeinde über alles, welche da ist sein Leib, nämlich die Fülle des, der alles in allem erfüllt (Eph 1,17-21).

In this passage, it becomes clear that our hope lies in a God who is Lord over life and death. As powers of death and darkness swell around us, may Paul's prayer be our prayer and strengthen our faith as we seek to be faithful workers in the vineyard of the Lord and citizens in the "city on a hill" which serves as a light to the world.

This Easter, our worship services will undoubtedly be different as we listen attentively from the safety of our homes. Now, more than ever before, we must cling to the promises of Jesus which he proclaimed in homes, on mountains, in a boat, in the temple, and synagogue alike: "*Wo zwei oder drei versammelt sind in meinem Namen, da bin ich mitten unter ihnen*" (Mt 18,20).


The message of the *Josef-Geschichte* and the wanderings of Israel in the desert remain a powerful message of God's faithfulness in times of struggle and unrest. *Am Karfreitag erinnern wir uns an das Leiden und Sterben Jesu am Kreuz.* On Sunday we usually prepare for *Abendmahl*. This year, as we hear these teachings, we will undoubtedly do so with a painful sense of "not yet," as we long for the day when it is safe to share the bread and wine (*des Herren Gedächtnis*) with joy. Monday will bring the joy of the resurrection—the high point of the Gospel where God overthrows death and enthrones Jesus as king of the universe. On Easter Tuesday we can continue with the *Auferstehunglehr*, or conclude the Easter Holy Days for this year. Each *Prediger* is encouraged to make all this as rich and meaningful as possible for the flock in their care.

Rightly understood, our lives are not on hold or paused, but rather we are actively living out our faith in Christ and our love for each other by observing Easter at a safe distance and adjusting to a new reality. As a people of resurrection and rebirth (*die neu Geburt*), we must show our reverence for life; at this time, this seems to be as simple and as difficult as staying at home. We can rest assured that the Gospel (*die Botschaft Jesus Christ*) will still be proclaimed; its message of healing is now more important than ever. Ministers have reported that their people are responding well to these adjustments, and a powerful moving of the Holy Spirit is felt. Thanks be to God!

Lieben Brüder und Schwester, wir hören "nicht auf, zu danken für euch, und gedenken euer in [unseren] Gebete" (Eph 1,16).

Euere Mithelfer in Christus,


Arnold Hofer


Samuel Waldner