Greetings to our Mid-America clergy,

It is our prayer that we as the Church entrusted with Good News might be preparing ourselves to respond to the great needs of our neighbors in the coming months - spiritually, physically, financially - the needs will be great. We have a message of hope, regardless of the world's situation, and this new normal provides us an opportunity to deepen our understanding of what our lives are really about. I want to remind you of the spiritual resources we have always at our disposal for times like these.

We need spiritual practices that go beyond our profession. The foremost is prayer - There's a scene in Peter Pan where Peter says, "Say your prayers, Hook!" We ministers need to be reminded to say our prayers as well. And prayer is both reflective and active. The goal, as Teresa of Avila noted, is to be Mary and Martha at the same time. Mary sat at Jesus feet and learned; Martha worked serving the meal. Teresa suggested that the ideal was to be serving and sitting at Jesus' feet at the same time. I suppose if you're like me, you've mastered Martha while neglected Mary! Spend time at the feet of Jesus beholding his face and spirit of peace.

God is in every moment of our life in ministry, if we only can know it. When we stop to take a deep breath and abide in Christ, we will be able to get through this storm. Leadership in these times is sustainable if we will keep our eyes on Jesus.

We are given the Spirit of God, which can rekindle our trust in the goodness of God, regardless of our circumstances. Remember that you have been entrusted with this gift of being an ambassador of reconciliation, and that gift is needed now more than ever. As Paul told Timothy long ago, 'Stir up the gift that is within you.' Remember your story of how God has saved you over and over again, and remember the church's story of being 'called out' to join Christ in the suffering of the world.

Find ways of staying connected during this period of isolation, especially with our elderly who may be alone. Pray for our Leaders and for our medical staff who are on the front lines. Finally, be strong and courageous, children of God. Paul Koch and I are planning a couple of supercluster calls with everyone in the Region as well Zoom cluster meeting calls. We will also be sharing with you an opportunity for the Region to support you in your technology needs. Look for more info in this week's Update.

Here's a prayer for you as an individual: Rock of Ages, it is easy to feel fearful today. This new virus is affecting nearly every part of our lives, and normalcy is shutting down. Life seems uncertain and out of control. I know that the Bible says, "Perfect love casts out fear." You alone are perfect love; would You please remove this fear I feel and replace it with confidence in You? I trust that You will take care of me - moment by moment, day by day, and not only me, but
those I care deeply for. I ask for you to give me the strength and creativity to continue to feed and shelter your sheep that I may be a faithful servant. Help me keep my eyes on Jesus, the Author and Completer of Faith. In the name of Jesus our Great Physician, Amen.

Ron Routledge, Regional Minister  
ron.ccma@sbcglobal.net

Paul Koch, Regional Minister  
paul.ccma@sbcglobal.net

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