

CLOSING THE CHURCH

Photos & Story by J.C. Edwards



CHURCH! NO MORE CHURCH! CHURCH CLOSING THE DOORS! WHAT? WHAT? GOD!
My heart was screaming to my head. What does the pastor mean? How could he stand there and say, “No more church, as we know it.” He proclaimed an official declaration to the awaiting church congregation, and from behind his pulpit. The sacred altar of the church from which the word of God is proclaimed, and yet shocking words of “**No More Church.**”

It seemed that time stood still to our, then lifeless beings. Ushers stood still at their post of duties. The choir, sat motionless, while holding closed hymn books. The congregation had been preparing for an adjournment. The acolytes stood ready to proceed to extinguish the candles: the power of the word. All, with hearts pounding to the words now in their minds: **no more church.**

I continued to try and comprehend the announcement of the church closing its doors. That seemed to be the general agreement of the church board of the denomination conference.

Having, normally, accompanied the pastor’s special concerns, with an underlying musical flow of incidental mood music, my fingers then fumbled, because my mind was muddled. Thus, there was a midnight silence within the soon to be closed, hallowed walls. No more preludes on the pending breathless pipe organ. No more chimes, tolling. No more children’s church. Choir rehearsal? Sunday school? Dance ministry? No more offerings. What about communion: in remembrance of him. A soon to be spirit of woe, to a congregation who looked forward weekly to fellowship.



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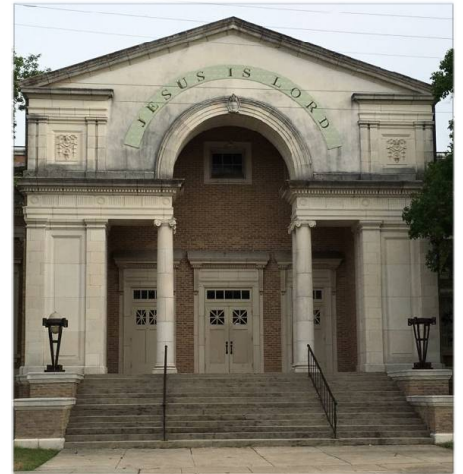
As, I saw the pastor's lips still moving, my ears had become deafly silent. My mind and heart were no longer in sync.

MY FAMILY! WHAT ABOUT MY FAMILY? This virus! I felt fear for the youngest to the aged. God, please help: sickness and death, suffering, healing! Is this the end to life, as we know it?

MY STUDENTS! My income. What about others? What about the homeless? What about the success of businesses? Blood on my door; I needed to put blood on my door, as during the time of the Passover. This Corona Virus, something we can't see nor know less of its origin.

As I continued, in my sacred silence, within the hallowed walls and stained glass, I slowly looked about for eye contact. I looked for a connection from anyone... but yet, not a one. Where was our hope? We walk by faith, not by sight.

Those few moments, of seemingly doom and destruction, were continued by the pastor; even though he was reading from his handwritten notes. The words were hard hitting and irregularly metered; staccato, unlevelled tones and hollow. He continued with, "we'll refrain from personal affections, i.e., hand shaking, hugging, cheek kissing and etc." No more high fives with the children. No more helping the aged up and down steps. No more greetings and conversation of how they had been blessed by the music; cherished memories of when they too, had sung in the choir.



I wondered if we'd finish the morning service, program as written. We gingerly continued. We continued to include the doxology: The Great Amen! There were few words of departure as we followed our usual exit paths and habits. The conversations were quite laconic, having given to hand gestures and hasty retreats to awaiting vehicles. The lingering eye contacts had been a comforting expression of love and hope. "I love you and I hope to see you soon as we overcome this plague."

**We seek connection during this separation.
In God, we trust!**