



New Deputy! Billy Williams was sworn in by County Clerk Monica Reyes (above right photo) and Sheriff Wayne McCutchen as a deputy with the Coke County Sheriff's Office on Wednesday, April 1, 2020. His daughter, Haven, is pictured above pinning on his badge. Williams has previously been with the Sheriff's Office and most recently was the City Superintendent for the City of Robert Lee.



16 Saturday evening, when the Sabbath ended, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome went out and purchased burial spices so they could anoint Jesus' body. 2 Very early on Sunday morning,[a] just at sunrise, they went to the tomb. 3 On the way they were asking each other, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" 4 But as they arrived, they looked up and saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled aside.

5 When they entered the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a white robe sitting on the right side. The women were shocked, 6 but the angel said, "Don't be alarmed. You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth,[b] who was crucified. He isn't here! He is risen from the dead! Look, this is where they laid his body. 7 Now go and tell his disciples, including Peter, that Jesus is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there, just as he told you before he died."

8 The women fled from the tomb, trembling and bewildered, and they said nothing to anyone because they were too frightened.[c]

[The most ancient manuscripts of Mark conclude with verse 16:8. Later manuscripts add one or both of the following endings.]

[Shorter Ending of Mark]

Then they briefly reported all this to Peter and his companions. Afterward Jesus himself sent them out from east to west with the sacred and unfailling message of salvation that gives eternal life. Amen.

9 After Jesus rose from the dead early on Sunday morning, the first person who saw him was Mary Magdalene, the woman from whom he had cast out seven demons. 10 She went to the disciples, who were grieving and weeping, and told them what had happened. 11 But when she told them that Jesus was alive and she had seen him, they didn't believe her.

12 Afterward he appeared in a different form to two of his followers who were walking from Jerusalem into the country. 13 They rushed back to tell the others, but no one believed them.

14 Still later he appeared to the eleven disciples as they were eating together. He rebuked them for their stubborn unbelief because they refused to believe those who had seen him after he

had been raised from the dead.[d]

15 And then he told them, "Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone. 16 Anyone who believes and is baptized will be saved. But anyone who refuses to believe will be condemned. 17 These miraculous signs will accompany those who believe: They will cast out demons in my name, and they will speak in new languages.[e] 18 They will be able to handle snakes with safety, and if they drink anything poisonous, it won't hurt them. They will be able to place their hands on the sick, and they will be healed."

19 When the Lord Jesus had finished talking with them, he was taken up into heaven and sat down in the place of honor at God's right hand. 20 And the disciples went everywhere and preached, and the Lord worked through them, confirming what they said by many miraculous signs.

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In 2019, our community-wide Easter service included an inspiring message out of Nehemiah 10. As the pastor shared, Nehemiah 10 doesn't call us to ONLY give the best of our agricultural goods. For an agrarian society, those goods symbolized the best of a person's time, effort, and energy. Religious worship revolved around the temple, but so did society. In short, God called the people to give the very best of their time, effort, and energy to both God AND community.

Today, we're called to do the same. Where we focus our time, effort, and energy is where our priorities lie. We may SAY we have different priorities (maybe to convince ourselves to do better), but our actual priorities are where we spend the best of our time, effort, and energy.

As we navigate a unique Easter season, in which corporate worship and family gatherings—the typical focal points of Easter celebrations—are detrimental to our public health, I pray that we consider the lessons of Nehemiah. Nehemiah did not pursue God's instruction while ignoring the threats facing his workers. He

tells us in Nehemiah 4:9, "we prayed to our God and post a guard day and night to meet this threat." Then, after that work was completed, Nehemiah called his people to give the best of their time, effort, and energy to God and community.

For Easter Week 2020, I call on each of us to do the same. We all know that the "church" is

God's people, not the building erected by the people. Let us defeat this threat to our collective health by focusing on the people more than the building and by worshipping together, in the safest and healthiest ways possible. And then, as this public health threat impacts our communities and their people, may we prayerfully

seek ways to give the best of our time, effort, and energy to God and community.

James Decker is a lawyer, farmer, and mayor in Stamford, and the creator of the forthcoming "West of 98" podcast and website. He may be contacted through Facebook at [facebook.com/james.decker](https://www.facebook.com/james.decker).

For the purposes of Texas Executive Order GA-14 the following are considered "Essential Services":

ADVISORY MEMORANDUM ON IDENTIFICATION OF ESSENTIAL CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE WORKERS DURING COVID-19 RESPONSE

- HEALTHCARE / PUBLIC HEALTH
- LAW ENFORCEMENT, PUBLIC SAFETY, AND OTHER FIRST RESPONDERS
- FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
- ENERGY
- WATER AND WASTEWATER
- TRANSPORTATION AND LOGISTICS
- PUBLIC WORKS AND INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT SERVICES
- COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
- OTHER COMMUNITY- OR GOVERNMENT-BASED OPERATIONS AND ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS
- CRITICAL MANUFACTURING
- HAZARDOUS MATERIALS
- FINANCIAL SERVICES
- CHEMICAL
- DEFENSE INDUSTRIAL BASE
- COMMERCIAL FACILITIES
- RESIDENTIAL/SHELTER FACILITIES AND SERVICES
- HYGIENE PRODUCTS AND SERVICES
- Other services as approved by the Texas Division of Emergency Management.