

North Presbyterian Church
921 College Avenue
Elmira, NY 14901-2048

NORTH STAR

June 2020

*Making Disciples
Making a Difference*

www.northpres.church

Phone: 607-734-2977

Fax: 607-734-2978

Worship: Sunday at 9:30 am

Sunday School: 11:00 am

(sanctuary worship and Sunday School are suspended until further notice)

IN THIS ISSUE:

- **Letter from Pastor Hicks: Page 2**
- **Warm Welcome: Page 3**
 - Parking Lot Worship Service Possibilities!
- **We are Family: Page 4**
 - In Our Thoughts & Prayers
 - Send a Card
 - Thoughts from Wendy Swatling
- **Children & Youth: Page 5**
 - Letter from our Director of Children & Youth Ministries
 - Kids' Corner Activity
- **Did You Know?: Pages 6-7**
 - Helpful Church Info for You
- **Happenings & FYIs: Pages 8-9**
 - Pastor Emeritus Update: Rev. Edmunds
 - Food Pantry Update
- **In the Spotlight: Pages 10-11**
 - Parking Lot Service Safety Guidelines
 - Annie LeFevre and face masks
- **A Special Invitation: Page 12**
 - Creative Ways to Stay Involved
- **Stewardship: Page 13**
 - Letter from Linda Palmer
- **Church Business: Page 14-15**
 - Pastoral Statement from PCSA
 - Letter from Presbytery Leadership
- **Romans 12:12: Page 16**
 - On Hope and Patience

Meet the Staff

Rev. Jim Hicks	Temporary Supply Pastor
Paul Holland	Music Director music@northpres.church
Barbara Mosher	Church Organist organist@northpres.church
Deb Stamp	Director of Children & Youth Ministries youth@northpres.church
Kim Townson	Office Administrator office@northpres.church

NOTICE: All worship services in the sanctuary, groups, meetings & committees at NPC are suspended until further notice. Stay tuned to our Fb page for updates & see our website for helpful resources.

June, 2020

A Letter from Pastor Hicks



Henry J. Taylor, former ambassador to Switzerland, tells how as a small boy he first accompanied his miner father into a coal mine in southern Ohio. They went to the mine shaft, a deep hole reaching down into the earth. The elevator for this shaft was in the process of being rebuilt, and the only way to go down on this occasion was in a big barrel attached to a hook on a chain. The father got into the barrel, crowded the boy in with him and, as the operator started the engine that controlled the chain, the barrel started its swift descent. Rapidly the blue sky became only a speck; then it was lost to sight entirely, and they were in the dark of the narrow shaft, the barrel scraping the sides and revolving dizzily as it plunged into the depths. The boy was seized with fear. He threw his arms around his father, who hugged him close and said, “Don’t be afraid, son. It’s all right. I’m with you.”

Down they plunged until at last they came to the bottom of the shaft. A new wave of fear went through the boy as he saw the low-hanging ceilings of earth in the passageways and realized the distance between him and the surface. A miner said, “You must be careful of gas; it’s at the top under the ceiling.” They walked on, deep in the earth, with the walls closing in on every side, and little Henry Taylor experiencing the overwhelming fright of claustrophobia. He reached out in the darkness and felt the big hand of his father taking his small hand. Nothing was said until one of the miners asked the boy, “Hey, kid, aren’t you afraid?”

“I would be afraid, sir,” Henry replied, “if I didn’t have hold of my father’s hand.”

Always in our lives is the helping hand of the Father. God is with us, despite any fears that may assail us. By His Spirit we are empowered to travel along our life’s journey in hope and confidence. With our hand held by our Father’s, we can go forth as Pentecost people, strengthened and enabled to cope and overcome.

Sincerely in Christ – Jim Hicks
Your Temporary Supply Pastor (with TLC)

Jesus said, “No one is able to take them out of my Father’s hand” (John 10:29).

You're invited to 
Join Us

at



JUST A LITTLE
Reminder

YOU ARE WARMLY INVITED

to join us at Sunday Parking Lot Service at NPC! ***A “test run” will take place on 5/31 at 9:30am*** and, providing all goes well, we hope to continue offering services in this capacity until we can gather together again in the sanctuary. While no concrete plans have been made yet regarding frequency of services, you can be sure that as details are firmed up we will be sharing them on the NPC Facebook page, on the website, in Coffee Talk with Kim Fb update videos, and sending out emails with the specifics. And, rest assured, meeting Chemung County and CDC Public Health & Safety Guidelines will be a priority as we work to keep everyone safe and comfortable. (see page 10). We are so excited to have this opportunity to gather at a distance!

Can't make it to the church parking lot or just prefer to stay at home? No worries! We will continue to offer audio sermons on the website and will also be offering a Zoom Conference Call option! Watch for an email from the church office or reach out to the office for the Zoom link info!

Whichever way works for you, join us!

Also don't forget you can stay connected with your church family in other new, creative ways! Virtual or distance connection may not be what we are used to, or even what we prefer, but it is better than no connection at all! Until our pause is over, join us for hymns and weekly Sunday worship sermons from Pastor Hicks on our website under the Teaching tab, as well as virtual live Sunday services and occasional Sing-A-Longs with Pastor Cynthia on Facebook! Also join us on Facebook each M, W & F for *Family, Faith & Fun with Miss Deb* and every T & Th for *Coffee Talk with Kim* as we work to keep us all informed, encouraged and supported.

We'll “see” you there!

We Are Family

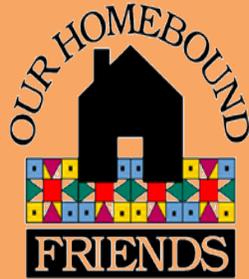
Send a Card Today!

June 7: Rita Dery
207 Greenway Boulevard
Churchville, NY 14428

June 14: Betty Carney
74 Smith Road
Millport, NY 14864

June 21: Margaret Carney
49 Colonial Drive
Horseheads, NY 14845

June 28: Mrs. Margaret Densberger
660 W. Washington Avenue
Elmira, NY 14901-1946



June 7: Alexii Lei and Peyton Malia Hoskins-Thomas

June 14: Aubri and Hayden Houck

June 21: Theresa and William Houck

June 28: Donald and Erin Jacob

**Jesus tells us
to pray without ceasing
for the good of God's people.**

"As a kite on a string,
so it is with the Spirit of God."

I have so enjoyed the hymns that Pastor Jim has included with our weekly service on the website. I ordered my own hymnal, so I could play (with my very rudimentary piano skills and my out of tune piano) and sing them at home.

"As the Wind Song" was one with which I was not familiar. It's such a beautiful song full of rich imagery of God and our relationship with Him. If you didn't get a chance to read the words, look it up. I was especially struck by the image of the kite. We, being the kite, are tethered to God. He holds on to us tightly. As we go through life, we, like the kite, dip and rise as stresses and blessings bring us down or lift us up. The kite soars and God is there to watch us with pride and share our joy. Sometimes the kite crashes, but God is still there to reel us back in to Him. And in time, He is able to help lift us up to fly again. Always tethered to Him... His grace, His strength, His hope, His love. He never lets go. Thanks be to God!

These are my thoughts on this beautiful Sunday morning. I pray that you all are well and I will get to see you in person soon.

Your sister in Christ,
Wendy Swatling

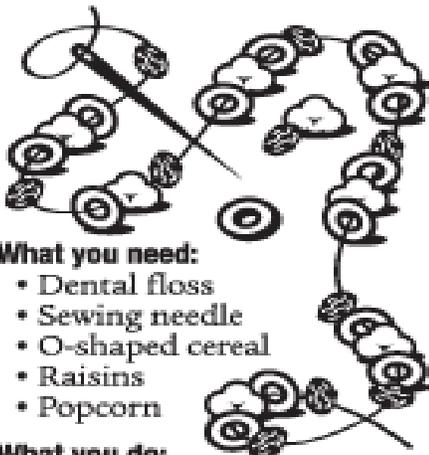


CHILDREN & YOUTH

KIDS CORNER

ROAD TRIP TREAT

Make this snack necklace to enjoy during summer travels.



What you need:

- Dental floss
- Sewing needle
- O-shaped cereal
- Raisins
- Popcorn

What you do:

1. Carefully thread a yard of floss through the needle.
2. String a pattern of cereal, raisins and popcorn on the floss until only 4 inches remain on either end. Tie the two ends together.
3. Repeat to make necklaces for your whole family.
4. When you're ready to eat, simply bite off each "bead." Experiment with other non-perishable foods.

Here we are in June already. Wow, where did the months go? Sometimes I feel like we've been living in this weird bubble forever. I am so thankful the weather is getting better and we can get outside and enjoy the fresh air and sunshine. I always find such peace working in the soil, planting our vegetable garden and flowers, lots and lots of flowers. I had two little helpers this year helping me pick out flowers and we have quite an assortment.

I've also been over at the church sorting out backgrounds, craft supplies and other miscellaneous items. I am a great believer in reusing items wherever possible and have started boxing up items for VBS, Christmas, Easter, etc., labeling them and neatly stacking so I can just go in and pull a box for whatever we need. There was also a lot of left-over props and backgrounds we wouldn't be using again so they will make their way to the dumpster. I save all VBS material such as dvds, cds, and teaching guides for each year and have quite a few which I would like to offer the use of to other churches in the area. We have even loaned out our material to Christian summer camps who put on a VBS for their campers. It's a great feeling being able to share our curriculum with others that might not have the finances to invest in the kits themselves. We include a lot of the background materials too which is great. We are extremely lucky to have so much donated to us from people in our church and even people who don't attend our church but know of our youth program and want to donate crafts of all kinds. In the last few years Mickey Vischansky has been able to gather almost everything she needs for VBS crafts just from our storage room. My hope is to have everything boxed, binned and labeled before we startup Sunday school again which will most likely be September 2020. VBS materials bought for this year will be stored and saved for VBS 2021 which will give us a big head start for next year. I am so eager to see all the kids again. I try to keep up with them all through Facebook, cards, and mailings but I miss their smiling faces and the sounds of their laughter as they run around the church. Let's all do our part so we can be together again soon.

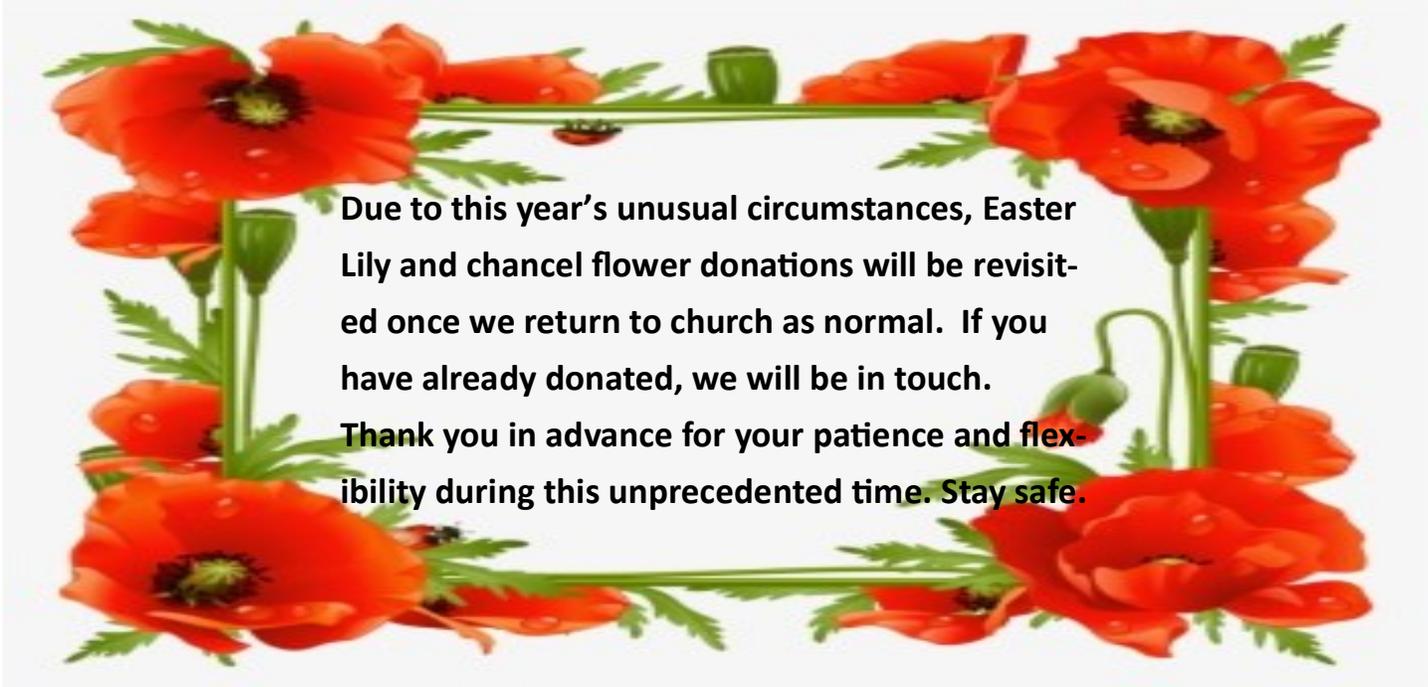
With love and blessings,
Deb Stamp
Director of Children and Youth Ministry



Did you know that “Song for a Wedding”, the music before and after our weekly audio sermons, was written by our own Paul Holland? It was!



did you know?



Due to this year’s unusual circumstances, Easter Lily and chancel flower donations will be revisited once we return to church as normal. If you have already donated, we will be in touch. Thank you in advance for your patience and flexibility during this unprecedented time. Stay safe.



**SCHOLARSHIP
OPPORTUNITY**

Hal Wolfe, one of the treasures of North Church (and while he is a past Treasurer, we deliberately mean a treasure!), with his new committee, will be reviewing all applications submitted for the Meyer Scholarship.

The Meyer Scholarship Fund, administered by North Presbyterian Church, has been established to help needy and worthy students further their education. The scholarship may be used at any nationally-accredited post-high school or post-graduate institution. The scholarship will be awarded annually, prior to school semester, at an amount to be determined by the Scholarship Committee. The total amount of the scholarship forthcoming, will be divided among the number of applicants that apply. Applicants must complete a scholarship application.

The Scholarship Committee believes that the Meyer Fund allows North Church an opportunity to be unique in the world of academic scholarships. While the typical academic scholarship focuses primarily on scholastic achievement measured by grades, the Meyer Scholarship Fund is designed with the understanding that applicants have spiritual experiences as well. In short, the Meyer Scholarship will recognize the applicant’s Christian experience, their journey of faith.

The following criteria will be used in making award decisions:

1. Christian experience
2. Financial need
3. Past academic achievement
4. Goals and aspirations
5. Activities and life experiences
6. Personal interview/references
7. Properly filled out application



Meyer Scholarship Fund

Please call the church office or see NPC website for an application. Applications must be turned into the church office by June 30.

PLEASE TAKE NOTE!

Staff and committee chairs have church email addresses!

If one of these addresses belongs to your position and you are in need of assistance setting it up, please contact the church office.

PLEASE NOTE THAT EFFECTIVE 9.1.19 THE OLD CHURCH OFFICE EMAIL ADDRESS HAS BEEN DISABLED.



June Food Pantry

Shopping List:

- At this time no food or item donations are being accepted. Monetary donation checks can be sent to the church, made out to NPC, with "Food Pantry" written in the memo line.

Thank you for your generosity!



Committee/Coordinator	Email Address
Audit	audit@northpres.church
Buildings & Grounds	campus@northpres.church
Building Use	building_use@northpres.church
Clerk of Session	session@northpres.church
Deacons	deacons@northpres.church
Education	education@northpres.church
Fellowship	fellowship@northpres.church
Finance	finance@northpres.church
Mission & Outreach	mission_outreach@northpres.church
Nominating	nominating@northpres.church
Staff Relations	staff_relations@northpres.church
Tech & Communications	tech_com@northpres.church
Treasurer	Financial_sec@northpres.church
Worship & Music	worship@northpres.church

Staff	Email Address
Church Administrator	office@northpres.church
Director of Youth Ministries	youth@northpres.church
Music Director	music@northpres.church
Organist	organist@northpres.church
Pastor	pastor@northpres.church



Available at www.northpres.church



A lot is going on at the NPC church website! Available this month on the NPC website's homepage is a letter from PCUSA regarding the church's re-entry into public life and worship. Additionally, on the site's homepage, are the guidelines regarding what you can expect as we try our hand at Parking Lot Services! How exciting! Lastly, just as a reminder, always available on the Calendar tab/Upcoming Events drop down option, are the most current updates on church happenings. Be sure to stay connected to real time info in this ever changing environment.

Happenings...

Update on the Pastor Emeritus Celebration for Rev. Edmunds

While our intended celebration May 24th could not happen, we are hoping to have a celebration later in the year. Read this exchange to Bob from Cindy (on behalf of session) and Bob's response

-Bill Furnas

On Thu, Apr 30, 2020 at 3:00 PM Kalweit, Cindy Subject: Re: Weekend of 5/24

Dear Bob and Susan – I hope this email finds you both well and surviving the COVID-19 shutdown/quarantine. It certainly has been a challenging time for everyone. Hoping and praying that we can slowly begin returning to our everyday activities. I am blessed to have a job that is considered essential so things haven't changed all that much for me on a day-to-day basis.

Unfortunately we in NY don't foresee that we will be able to have corporate worship anytime soon. Even when we do re-open the church I believe many of our folks will not attend in-person worship for quite a while. I believe "fellowship" of any kind will be put on hold. It has become obvious to the Session of NPC that we will need to postpone your visit to Elmira to celebrate the conferring of Pastor Emeritus status. Even by the end of May we believe it would be unwise for you to travel to NY. Also, we want to be sure that we have a "full-house" for your return to the pulpit at NPC. Everyone is so looking forward to hearing you preach again. It would be a shame if you came all the way up here and we didn't have many in attendance.

At this time I am not even sure as to when we should try to reschedule. Realistically it may have to wait until 2021 but we can remain optimistic that it could be in 2020 if your schedule would allow. I will be sure to stay in touch in the weeks and months ahead as we have a better idea of how long things will take to return to "normal"...whatever that is!

In the meantime, stay well, stay sane, stay close to God who provides us with unending comfort and grace during our times of trial.

In Christ,

Cindy Kalweit



From: Bob Edmunds Date: 4/30/20 6:13 PM (GMT-05:00)
Cindy,

Your email does in fact find us well and surviving COVID-19, although we are in truth going stir-crazy! Susan and I "survive" by seeing our six grands and their parents at local parks on Saturdays (wearing masks and trying to keep a 6 feet distance, but not always!). Like everybody in Elmira, we in western NC look toward that time when we can once again attend church and go to restaurants and malls without the nagging thought of dangerous microbes being in the air. But we are thankful for FaceTime and good health.

We fully understand and agree with the need to postpone the Memorial Day weekend events. It makes perfect sense to wait until churches are open and folks are feeling more secure. And then we can hug and shake hands and enjoy the fellowship of the NPC family once again.

Our calendar is very flexible for the remainder of 2020 and into 2021. When the Session sees an appropriate opportunity opening up, just let us know and we will look at dates that are mutually agreeable. Actually, I feel so honored to be invited back and welcomed to the pulpit that waiting only makes looking forward to it something to be savored!

May the North Church family continue to draw close to Christ during these uncertain times so that you then can celebrate coming together in worship and service when the coronavirus is gone and the joy of Christian fellowship returns.

Grace and peace,
Bob



As of the end of May, the NPC Food Pantry continued to operate as a drive-up only facility, handing out food and toiletries on Wednesdays and Fridays.

There has been an increase in first-time users of the food pantry, as unemployment climbs. The customers continue to express their gratitude for this help – gratitude which should be passed on to our volunteers, and the generous donors keeping the pantry afloat. In addition to checks arriving from NPC congregants, we have received funding from Westside United Methodist Church, First Presbyterian Church, Ladies of Charity and individual donors.

The Food Bank of the Southern Tier also has issued extra funding, in the form of Covid-19 grants, and offered some no to low-cost food and toiletries for pantries to hand out.

Looking ahead, there are some major changes in pantry focus and operations that will occur when the Covid-19 restrictions are lifted.

First, the pantry will continue to operate Wednesdays and Fridays, 10 a.m.-noon, but will not re-open on Mondays. The retirement of several of our volunteers in the past year means we don't have the staff to consistently handle three days a week.

Second, the pantry offerings will be focused on food and personal care items. We will no longer collect and distribute clothing, shoes, books, magazines, kitchen items, etc.

We also will no longer accept donations of used plastic or reusable bags, due to contamination concerns. No decision has been made as to whether food or personal care item donations will be accepted.

Third, the flow of customers through the pantry will be modified to ensure that only a limited number of people are in the pantry at one time.

We are grateful for the volunteers currently working in the pantry, as well as the many folks who have offered to come in and help, made masks for the volunteers and/or donated funding. Our community is blessed to have this church, and this pantry.

Karen Mosteller and Pat Richards

In the Spotlight

Provided we are able to continue holding Parking Lot Services, here is helpful reference information:

We are so excited we have this opportunity for our community to gather at a distance!
To do this, your participation needs to follow the guidance of Chemung County and CDC.

You can read here: <https://www.mytwintiers.com/uncategorized/chemung-county-executive-issues-guidance-for-parking-lot-church-services/>

Here are highlights we need to keep in mind from that guidance:

Cars will park at least six feet apart.

Please use only the North Entrance (towards Roe Ave.) We will have someone guiding your parking.

All congregants will remain in their cars for the entirety of the service.

Windows will remain no more than half open and doors will remain closed.

Please tune your FM radio to the frequency we will post on the pillars.

Parishioners will not sit in the beds of pickup trucks.

A box or basket will be provided for parishioners to deposit their tithes and offerings without engaging in social contact or leaving their vehicle.

That large basket you know from the Narthex, someone will have it available to you as you exit.
Please have your mask on if you roll down your window.

At the conclusion of the services, parishioners will exit as they came.

You will be guided when to pull out. To move efficiently, we will try to have people going North (towards Roe) use that driveway. People going South (towards town) use the other driveway.

Due to car spacing requirements, we will need to limit the number of cars in the parking lot. Please understand if you are turned away.

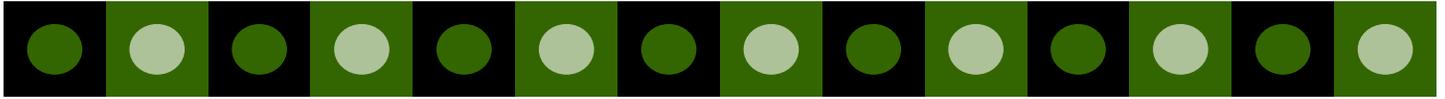
Rev. Jim Hicks will be here to preach, and Paul Holland will guide us with music!

Looking forward to seeing you all, in your cars!





In the Spotlight



As the stay-at-home order is being lifted and businesses are re-opening and public life is starting to re-emerge with new social expectations, do you find yourself in need of a face mask?

**Did you know that Annie LeFevre is making face masks herself?
Because she is talented like that, she is!**

**And did you know that she is offering them to
whomever needs them in our church family FREE OF CHARGE?
Because she is generous like that, she is!**

**(And because she is kind like that,
she may also be open to helping out some not in our church family
as well, if you happen to know of a need.)**

**If you or someone you care about are in need of a face mask,
please feel free to reach out to her or the church office.**



**There are so many ways to be together in spirit while we are apart physically.
While it may take some creativity, it's definitely worth the while.
Here are just a few of the ways you are invited to grow your spirituality and
continue being active with your NPC family:**

JUST A LITTLE
Reminder



- ◇ Listen to audio sermons and hymns on our website
 - ◇ Watch Sunday worship on Facebook live
 - ◇ Mail in your usual church financial contribution
 - ◇ Pray for those on the prayer chain
 - ◇ Send cards to our homebound friends
- ◇ Deliver face masks from Annie LeFevre to those who need them
 - ◇ Make a financial contribution to the Food Pantry
 - ◇ Call that person you miss from Fellowship Hour
 - ◇ Offer to host a Zoom Bible Study
 - ◇ Attend daily Morning Prayers at noon at [Www.Facebook.com/Upperroomcenter](https://www.facebook.com/Upperroomcenter)
- ◇ Scroll our Facebook page for sing-a-longs, inspirational quotes, arts & crafts, recipes, announcements and updates at <https://www.facebook.com/North-Presbyterian-Church-317905658221204/?ref=settings>
- ◇ Explore free and discounted learning opportunities and e-courses at www.Upperroom.org
- ◇ Check out the Devotionals tab on the NPC website

June 2020 Stewardship

During this time of quarantine, like you I've been cleaning out. I ran across the Crown Financial Ministries workbook from a seminar we held years ago at North. Session 7 "The Gift" really spoke to me as I reflected on stewardship for this newsletter.

I John 3:17 "Whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?"

James 2:15-17 "If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,' and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself."

It's not enough to just know about God - we have to put our faith into action. We need to help one another, to reach out to those in need. Food, clothing, shelter - the basic necessities of life. Sometimes, though, all that is required is your time...a receptive ear, a shoulder to cry on, an encouraging word. Especially now when so many folks are lonely and frightened. You can be the answer to someone's prayer - the hands and feet of Christ - so attune yourself to those little nudges from the Holy Spirit. As Crown Financial encourages: be generous with your time, your attitude, your forgiveness, and your encouragement.

Stay healthy!
Peace and hugs,
Linda Palmer, Finance Committee

If anyone has material possessions and sees
a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them,
how can the love of God be in that person?
Dear children, let us not love with words or speech
but with actions and in truth.

1 JOHN 3:17-18



Pastoral Statement on the church's reentry to public life and worship from PCUSA:

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place" (Acts 2:1). So begins the account of the gift of the Holy Spirit to the church in the book of Acts. As we approach the day of Pentecost in the year 2020, we understand that it may not be possible for the members of our congregation to be "all together in one place" this year. While some restrictions are being lifted in some places and for some people, the ongoing threat of the Covid-19 global pandemic will require that we return to church in a way that is measured and mindful of the needs of the most vulnerable among us. While some may begin to attend public worship in person, we know that some will need to continue to worship at home for some time.

We give thanks, then, for the promise of our faith—that the Lord God will bless and keep us, the risen Christ is with us, and the Holy Spirit connects us with believers near and far. We take comfort and inspiration from the example of the earliest believers, who "spent much time together in the temple" and "broke bread at home ... with glad and generous hearts" (Acts 2:46). As we anxiously track the news in these times—with numbers of new cases, numbers of persons who have died, and numbers of those who are recovering—we remember the good news of the gospel: "And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47).

As this congregation begins to resume public activities, please know that we will do so through a careful process of discussion and discernment, with an abundance of caution and concern for those who are most vulnerable, upon consideration of the best scientific knowledge at our disposal, in the spirit of constant prayer, and with full trust in the grace of Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit.

We may make mistakes along the way. There will surely be awkward moments as we adjust to new protocols and practices. There will be times of frustration, disappointment, and grief. We will have countless opportunities to exercise the spiritual gifts of patience, kindness, gentleness, and self-control.

But there will also be blessings. There will be wonderful surprises, great celebrations, and moments of deep satisfaction. We will get to see glimpses of the new thing God is doing, even now. We will have opportunities to savor the spiritual gifts of love, joy, peace, generosity, and faithfulness.

Let us be faithful, then—to God and to one another—as we receive the gifts and work through the challenges of this time in the life of our congregation and world. Let us be guided by the Word, responsive to the Spirit, and open to the grace of God. Let us remember that nothing can separate us from God's love in Christ Jesus.

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)



May 15, 2020

Dear Friends,

I hope that you are all staying safe and healthy here in our region during these unprecedented times. We continue to celebrate the Resurrection of Christ, although in very different ways from any previous time we have celebrated. We now look forward to Pentecost, trusting in the Holy Spirit to continue inspiring us.

The Leadership Team of the Presbytery has continued to meet regularly, and the General Council met this week. The Presbytery continues to worship in a different manner. We have a meeting upcoming on the 26th virtually, and will have a worship (including the Lord's Supper so be sure to have your elements ready). Congregations are finding different ways to support each other, and their surrounding communities. If you or your congregation is struggling to find worship opportunities, please check the COVID-19 resources on our website, or reach out to the Leader Care team. Leader Care is hosting weekly meetings which I understand are quite beneficial. The Committee on Mission and Witness has recommended, and the Leadership Team with the affirmation of Council has approved, distribution of grants to each congregation to help with emergency COVID costs. Congregations that don't require these funds are being urged to put them towards COVID relief in their communities, such as ministries working against food instability. We're supporting each other in the way of the New Testament church, while keeping safe physical distance to protect our vulnerable members.

I'd like to give some updates about the COVID-19 status. As a physician, I am concerned about the misinformation or false information I'm seeing spread. This is common in evolving situations, but there are certainly many people being misled. The two most notable concerns are the urgent care doctors from California who try to extrapolate their statistics incorrectly. Of note, I would refer to the joint response by the ACEP and AAEM, the two emergency medicine organizations, who put out a joint statement pointing out their statistical errors and their mistakes. This is worth reviewing, especially since those two organizations actually don't frequently agree. The other is the Plandemic video that has been making rounds. It's worth noting that the researcher involved has been severely discredited and hasn't been able to publish since. On behalf of physicians and other health professionals, I would like to note that we are actively reviewing the literature and information available. Especially now, in all things, we should be as wise as serpents.

I would also like to share some cautious optimism. Our regions in our presbytery have both been allowed to start Un-Pausing tomorrow, with Phase I opening. It doesn't have a lot of impacts on churches right at the moment, or even on our social distancing. Case spread has slowed in the region, mostly due to significant care that many have taken. I would strongly recommend continuing personal measures to distance and limit spread. The virus does spread easily through personal contact. I do think with time, more business and places will be able to open, but there will be setbacks and localized quarantines. It will remain a significant concern going forward until we can have a vaccine. I have read some sources providing cautious optimism. Many vaccine trials are already started, and apparently some are showing progress early on. There are reports that one has already partnered with a company with the ambitious goal of a billion doses available by the end of the year. That's ambitious, and I don't know if it's possible, but it is hopeful. Information about the virus is accumulating dramatically. It seems to be acting like other coronaviruses. It doesn't mutate faster, and doesn't seem to be mutating like influenza, which is encouraging. There are early studies showing that even only mildly ill patients do make antibodies, and other early evidence suggesting that antibodies do likely offer protection, although that has to be confirmed, and we don't yet know how long that protection could last. This is positive news, because it gives hope that asymptomatic or mild infections should offer some protection, and successful vaccination likely would as well. This does not mean we should risk intentional exposure, because there are still a high enough percentage of people who will develop severe disease that the cost of doing so will be too high, but it's early good news. On the other hand, there is evidence that children are just as susceptible to getting the virus, meaning that they can easily spread it to others. There have also been a growing number of cases of pediatric inflammatory multi-system syndrome associated with COVID-19. It's rare, but can be a more severe illness. Children are still less affected, but we should still be concerned for their health.

We must be patient with this. We are all eager to see loved ones, both family and church family. However, rushing back will make transmission much easier. Asymptomatic spread remains a major concern, and the long incubation period makes it easy to transmit. This is the reason that we continue to encourage that even as the phases progress, congregations use caution. Presbytery Leadership is recommending that church buildings remain closed and communities refrain from holding in-person worship and other group gatherings until Phase 4. The Operations Committee has decided not to reopen the Presbytery Office until then, as well. The reopening guidelines and references on the website can be helpful. Limitations on singing and close contact will likely be necessary (I don't like it either; I love to sing). If your congregation doesn't have small group gatherings or Bible studies, this may be an ideal time to cultivate that aspect of ministry. Regardless, all of our work should be to the glory of God. I look forward to meeting with you, digitally at first, and soon enough in person.

Serving Thee Whom We Adore,
Rob Anderson MD Chair of General Council

Members of the Presbytery Leadership Team
Rev. Glenn Kennedy, Moderator
Elder Virginia Champlain, Vice Moderator
Elder Rob Anderson, Chair of General Council
Rev. Amy Loving Austin, Stated Clerk
Elder Tom Bailey, Treasurer
Elder Susan Orr, Presbytery Leader



"Rejoice in hope,
be patient
in tribulation,
be constant
in prayer."

ROMANS 12:12

