



April 2, 2020

Dear First Presbyterian Church Family,

Over the past few weeks, I have had the hymn “On Christ the Solid Rock I Stand” on repeat. It has provided me a sense of comfort. I know today is hard. We are trying to find our way as we ask questions of what church looks like present day. We are striving to be a church family, not bound by walls, but with you right where you are this day. It has been a joy knowing children are writing letters to our church members, hearing stories of church members shopping for one another’s groceries, listening to new adventures of learning how to navigate technology, and having the opportunity to pray with you on the phone. Thank you for your openness to participating in worship online. We know it can feel awkward. We take comfort in knowing that God’s presence is with us in our homes as we virtually give thanks and praise.

Please know church family, we are here. Your church staff is here, first and foremost, lifting your names in prayer. We are with you each day in our Lenten reflections, in the reading of children’s books, in worship planning, in the phone calls, and in learning new ways to be the church. Our Session and staff have been faithful in the discernment of our worship experiences as well as the ministry opportunities of our congregation. We continue to worship, to serve, to give, and to grow together as a people of God. The Session will meet on April 8th to decide how we all will “gather” for worship on Easter Sunday. Indeed, we are an Easter people this day and every day! I am looking forward to the time we can rejoice as we shout Alleluia!

The following is the schedule of viewing opportunities for our upcoming worship services. Palm Sunday will be a prerecorded worship service provided on Facebook and our website at 11am, Sunday, April 5th. Holy Week daily reflections by your pastors will be shared at noon each day of Holy Week. Maundy Thursday will be a pre-recorded worship experience provided on Facebook and our website at 6pm, Thursday, April 9th. The Sacrament of Communion will be celebrated. We are thankful in these surreal times the church is reformed and always reforming! We have been given permission by the PCUSA to administer the sacrament in a new way as we long to gather at the table to break bread and drink the cup.

We recognize wholeheartedly the grief we are all experiencing. The wilderness road this season of Lent has been all too trying. I pray each and every one of you will join me in singing this day and for the days to come:

“My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness
I dare not trust the sweetest frame
But wholly lean on Jesus' name
On Christ the solid rock I stand
All other ground is sinking sand
All other ground is sinking sand.”

Grateful to serve,

Rev. Neeley Rentz Lane
Senior Pastor
Neeley@fpccov.org

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FIRST PRESS

**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH STAFF**

March Session Highlights

- ◆ Session approved Emergency Actions in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic that include, the adoption of a 4 stage protocol to use as a guideline for church activities, voted to move to the Orange protocol temporarily closing the church offices and all activities and moving worship service to online platform, and approved ELC staff to continue receiving payroll through the end of March.
- ◆ Session approved nomination of Susan Boteler to replace Del Boyer for his remaining term on session.
- ◆ Within Christian education the ELC is planning a fundraiser for April 17; the Children’s Sunday School is off to a great start using the Growing in Gratitude curriculum; the youth are planning for Youth Sunday on May 3rd as well as the Montreat Retreat; the adult Sunday school has had a large number of participants each Sunday.
- ◆ Session reviewed and approved a new Child Protection Policy.
- ◆ Session approved the design of the covered walkway planned for extending from the west entrance of building to Brown Street.
- ◆ The Finance committee’s audit was reviewed and the recommendation to setup a payroll service for the church was approved.
- ◆ A new Personnel Policy was reviewed and approved by session. The policy includes provisions covering Family leave as well as mandatory guidelines concerning pastor soul care.
- ◆ Session approved the creation of a new committee for Marketing and Communications that will focus on external activities of the church.
- ◆ Session approved a \$500.00 donation to Action Ministries in support of feeding students that are at home during the Covid-19 virus.
- ◆ Session approved a request from Rev. Neeley Rentz-Lane to deliver communion to church members that are unable to attend normal Sunday services (homebound, retirement homes, hospitals).

Submitted by John McCarthy, Clerk of Session

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New Address

Koen Ardis has joined the Navy and is in the second phase of his training. His new address is:

440 Roberts Ave.
Pensacola, FL 32511

- 1 Billy Fortson
- Joe Moon
- 3 Bill Cobham
- 7 Maxine Blankenship
- 8 Nick Jessup
- 10 Wayne Scarborough
- 11 Kingsley Allen
- 16 Martha Taylor
- Guy McGiboney

- 17 Matthew Howell
- Kent Compton
- Neeley Lane
- 19 Laurie Bunn
- 22 Sarah Jane Moss
- 23 Barbara Luton
- Phyllis Pruner
- 28 Elizabeth Pope
- 29 Sam Moss
- 30 Phyllis Yoder

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Dear Friends,

As many of you know my family is moving Lancaster, PA at the beginning of April. We have so much appreciated this community and all the moments we have shared with you as individuals. I am thankful for the well wishes we have received already. But I am saddened that we will not be able to gather with our church family for our last Sunday in Georgia.

You may not be able to physically send us out, but I can still leave you with a benediction. This is a bible passage close to my heart on which I preached a few years ago. I am thinking very differently about it in our present context, so I would like to share again: 1 Peter 4:7-11.

"The end of all things is near; therefore be serious and discipline yourselves for the sake of your prayers. Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaining. Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. To him belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen."

"The end" sounds like an ominous thing for those living in a culture of wealth and power like ours. At the least we may think of "the end" as a sad thing like saying goodbye to old friends. In Peter's context speaking to the early church in an oppressed culture, this was a message of hope that all suffering would soon come to an end.

When I preached on this passage, I highlighted a grand cultural vision for how all of our words have the potential to be undergirded by the authority of God. All that we do may be supported by strength supplied by God. That pretty much covers everything. All that we say and do represents the Kingdom of God!

While all of that is still true, the events surrounding the coronavirus pandemic have highlighted to me even more that the real strength of this passage is less evident in our efforts to "change the world," as it is in our more humble efforts to simply "be the church" God has called us to be.

We should be intentional about prayer. We should love one another in practical ways. We should be hospitable to everyone as they have need.

I have witnessed doctors who tirelessly serve patients, care for their own families, and still find time to address difficult questions about COVID-19 on the internet. I have witnessed friends who keep the food pantries stocked and make deliveries for those most at risk from the virus. I have witnessed college staff go out of their way to personally support students with safe space on campus, at a time when they are unsure where to go as the risk of infection is present everywhere.

In the most simple acts of kindness, we represent the "manifold grace" of God. In other translations, the "various grace" of God. Really, a "multi-colored rainbow of grace" through which God's light shines on creation with a promise of hope for the nations.

If you would like to keep in touch with us, we can still be reached via the same phone, email, and Facebook accounts for Michael, Caryn, and CJ.

Again, thank you for being family to us during our seven and a half years far from home. We now go to be closer to our family of origin. We carry with us memories of fellowship and music, youth lock-ins and family retreats, Sunday school classes and so much more. We so wish we could be a part of the great things that are already unfolding at First Presbyterian Church in Covington.

But remember this: "You've got a friend in Pennsylvania." ;-)

Grace and Peace,
Michael Thompson

Dear Church Friends and Family,

Thank
You!



Thank you all for your cards, calls, prayers, and concern during my hospitalization and recovery, for my family and especially for Natalie (who is doing well and is back at work). Thank you sweet Neely for your visit, and dear Kimmy for your messages, and to all the dedicated church staff, too! You all brightened my time of healing, and you gave me hope and reason to know I would return to good health. Our blessings are fully realized in such times, as compassion, appreciation, patience and understanding for others deepen. These are silver linings from God our Father in difficult circumstances. Peace and love to all during these unusual days!

Tricia Hinton



Community Food Pantry News

The Food Pantry has temporarily closed because of social distancing. We are however, donating food to the First United Methodist Food Pantry who are operating more hours during this time. Donations of food and money are still being received to take part in this community effort. Food can be dropped off at the FUMC Food Pantry, 2160 Church Street, from 11:00am-1:00pm weekdays. You are to leave it outside the door and workers will take it in the building. Please tell them that your are leaving it from the Community Food Pantry.