

FOCUS



The weekly newsletter of
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Sumter, South Carolina

April 21, 2020

OUR COVID-19 RESPONSE

All in person church events, activities, meetings and gatherings have been discontinued through the end of April.

This includes FPC Preschool and Kindergarten and Sunday Morning Worship.

If you have a pastoral emergency, please contact Pastor Nick (office: 803-773-3814, ext. 101 or his cell: 704-996-8802).

Dear Church Family,

I am so ready for us to be back together. I can't believe it's been close to 8 weeks since we have all been in worship! I must admit that I have struggled not knowing what to do. Yet, thankfully, I remembered the children's Bible story, Jesus Teaches Us to Pray from the Grace and Gratitude Spring 2020 Sunday school curriculum. I hope you enjoy the story too.

Jesus had some special friends called disciples. The disciples tried really hard to do the things that Jesus did. They wanted to learn more about following in Gods way.

One day, Jesus talked to his friends about prayer.

"When you pray," Jesus said, "remember that God is like a loving parent and really wants to talk with you."

"But what should we say?" asked Peter.

"Keep it simple," replied Jesus. "You don't need fancy words or long prayers."

So, what words should we use?" asked John.

Jesus thought carefully. "Here are some words you could say," he said.

*"Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
Forgive us our debts;
As we forgive us out debtors,
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil."*

The disciples learned the simple prayer that Jesus taught them. They passed on the prayer that Jesus taught them. They passed on the prayer to their friends and family. Eventually it was written down, so it would never be forgotten. Now we can say Jesus' special prayer whenever we want to pray to God.

If you are ever at a loss for words and don't know what to pray, you can always pray the prayer Jesus taught us to pray.

Grace and peace,

Kelly Hickey



Church, I pray this focus article finds you well amidst this strange time. Can you believe we've only been at this for one month? It is beginning to feel like 3 or 4 at best. I do hope you have been taking advantage of our online worship services. As of late, the Cheek family has enjoyed providing you with a time to connect with God and one another from our backyard. For the protection of our worship staff, we have been diligent to give them a couple of weeks away from the building and others. We may continue this going forward for a couple more weeks as cases of the virus in Sumter and SC are not expected to decline as of yet. I am continually grateful for our entire staff as they navigate these uncharted waters. We are all constantly trying to remain in contact with our ministry areas through phone calls, texts, Facebook, email and Zoom. I have asked you all before, but I will do so again, if you need anything or have concerns, please don't hesitate to contact us directly. We are here for you.

This past week, Ashley and I were honored to help celebrate the life and legacy of Mary Ellen Blanding. It wasn't an easy week. When we remember loved ones together, the one thing we are almost always looking for is a hug. In this time of social distancing, only close family were able to be present for the outside service. We all spread out from one another, and I mustered all the vocal strength I could to make sure my words of encouragement and remembrance were heard across the open space. It made me realize how challenging, but also how important it is for us to show love in this time. Mary Ellen was a force of steadfast love - a love that would never quit, no matter what. She would love through the struggles, through the obstacles, through whatever storm was in her way.

I think we are called to do the same through this season. We are to be a people who muster all the strength we can to love one another in new and creative ways no matter what. We are to Zoom, to text, to write letters, to call, to email, to do whatever it takes to span the gap between us. That's exactly what Jesus did on his resurrection day. He was stuck in a lifeless, empty tomb that separated him from the ones he loved. But his steadfast love for others still found a way. His steadfast love found a way to be present with those who needed him, and with those whom he also needed just as much. Friends, let us learn from Mary Ellen and from the risen Christ. Let us be the church today.

Please, stay connected with us online, and reach out across the gap to stay connected with one another. We need each other now more than ever.

Blessings and Peace to you and yours,

Nick

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NOTES FROM JONI

Hymn resource during quarantine: Hymnary.org

In these times of uncertainty and stress, many of us are turning to music to give us grounding and comfort. Some days we delight in discovering new songs online as artists burst with creativity during this time of confinement and introspection. Many have told me that old hymns come to mind and bring back memories of good times with family and friends. I use **Hymnary.org** often in worship planning to do background research or to find a forgotten favorite. This website accesses many hymnals from different denominations, including *Glory to God* and the blue *Presbyterian Hymnal*. The user can easily access lyrics, print music and in many cases, download organ or piano recordings. You may find these resources to be an enrichment for your home worship.

Under the website COVID-19 Resources link, *When Peace Like a River* appears on its list of trending hymns. The website states that "this is a hymn to be sung amidst the 'Whys' of life. It is a testimony of our faith, even during tragedies and loss. It's also a hymn of comfort, soothing the soul and reminding us of our peace in Christ."

When peace like a river attendeth my way;
 When sorrows like sea billows roll;
 Whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say,
 "It is well, it is well with my soul."
 Refrain: It is well with my soul; It is well, it is well with my soul.

Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,
 Let this blest assurance control:
 That Christ has regarded my helpless estate,
 And has shed his own blood for my soul. Refrain.



REMINDERS FOR YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES

Youth group is alive and well -- online that is! Join us Sunday nights on ZOOM!
 Middle School ~ 6:15-6:45 p.m.
 High School ~ 7:00-7:30 p.m.

All summer activities are still scheduled as normal!
 Sumter United Ministry's Restore: June 7-12
 High School Montreat: July 12-18
 Middle School Montreat: July 15-19

Please call or text Taylor (803-968-9655) any time to receive info or to sign up for youth groups or trips.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

The Children's Ministry Subcommittee will meet via ZOOM on Monday, May 4 to discuss upcoming summer events, including Vacation Bible School and Music and Arts Camp. An update will be sent once it is determined how to move forward. Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact Kelly at khickey@fpcsumter.org.



JOYS AND CONCERNS

Home: Tiny Owens, Mayes DuBose, David R. Brown, Charlie Hodgins, Rick Parker (Lisa Bratton's Stepfather), Charles King (Greg King's Father)

Austin, TX: Robert Cain (George Cain's father)

St. Jude: Elizabeth Williams

CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY is extended to the family of Mary Ellen Blanding, who died April 14.

FOCUS ON FINANCES

Two Weeks Beginning April 5 and 12, 2020

	Received		Budgeted
	Two Weeks	YTD	YTD
Revenue			
Contributions	\$21,606.	\$ 204,026.	Pending
*Other Sources	\$ 406.	\$ 8,866.	Session
	\$22,012.	\$ 212,892.	Approval

*Endowments, Church Event Fees, etc.