

# ADVOCATE

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**April 2020**

## **Don't Miss a Church Service!**

Greetings to you all! Although we cannot worship at the church during this “virus era,” you are welcome to watch the sermons that Rev. Gauen is taping for us on Sunday mornings. They are on Facebook, starting about 10:15 am. If you miss a sermon then, you can watch it anytime—and catch up with previous sermons that you might have missed. We began recording sermons on Sunday, March 15. Just go to the church’s Facebook page. Or you might try this link:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/132682200099875/>.

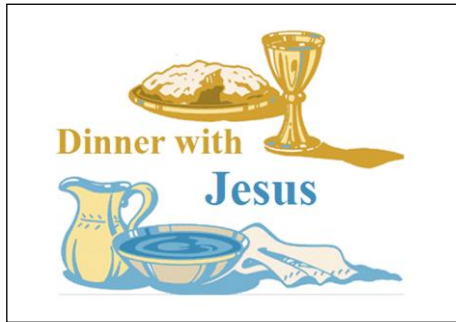
The church is closed, but you can call Rev. Mark Gauen on his cell phone or contact him by email if you have a pastoral concern or a suggestion.

*Happy Easter!*



Since it is likely that we will not be able to gather in person for Holy Week services, we will plan on live-streaming Palm Sunday and Easter sermons and prayers, as we are doing with our regular Sunday services. (See above.) We are also inviting everyone to participate in a church-wide, at-home, Agape Meal on Maundy Thursday. (See article below). In addition, the Westerville Area Ministerial Association is considering ways to conduct community-wide Good Friday services. When that is determined, we will let the congregation know.

# First Presbyterian Maundy Thursday Celebration



Expecting that we will not be able to worship together for Maundy Thursday, the Worship Committee has devised a way that we can be together while we are apart. At 6:00 p.m. on Maundy Thursday, April 9, the whole church is invited to celebrate an Agape Meal in our own homes. An Agape Meal is an old tradition in Christianity and honors the special place that meals had in Jesus' ministry, but it is not connected with the sacrament of communion. The idea is that each family, couple, or individual will prepare their

own meal for Thursday evening. However, before the meal, all of us will share common words and scriptures from a script that Rev. Gauen prepared for all to use (see below) The hope is that we can all do this in our own homes at the same time and thereby share a common experience even though we are separated. Of course, if that is not possible for you, you can do this on your own schedule, perhaps not connected with a meal.

## An Agape Feast Service for the Community of the First Presbyterian Church of Westerville

*Participants: Family, couple, individual; each in their own homes all at the same hour if possible.*

*Time: 6:00 p.m. on Maundy Thursday, April 9. (or whatever time is convenient)*

*Materials: A normal dinner meal with two items included: bread in any form, even a cracker; water poured in individual glasses; a Bible*

*Optional Materials: cross, candles, pictures of loved ones who are in other places*

*Readers: One or more persons should be assigned to do the readings. For couples and individuals, readings may be done silently.*

## A Service for an Agape Meal at Home

### Opening Words

Reading 1: The early Christians had a common meal, which expressed the self-giving love seen ultimately in God's love for the world. Since that early time, many Christians have desired to celebrate Holy Communion. Due to the lack of an ordained minister, they could not. Thus, a service with the similar significance was established that did not require an ordained minister. This meal was called the Agape Meal. *Agape* is the Greek word for the self-giving love of God, which is seen in God's love for the world. Today, some call it the Love Feast. The Agape Meal acknowledges our community, sharing, fellowship, and unity through the symbols of bread and water.

Reading 2: Tonight is Maundy Thursday, the night of Jesus' Last Supper. Since our church community cannot meet at a common table to share this meal, we are meeting around Christ's table, each in our own homes. As we share this meal here, many brothers and sisters in our church are doing the same thing, and in this way, we proclaim our togetherness in Christ. Tonight, as we share this meal, we also remember the importance of meals in the ministry of Jesus and how Jesus used meals to demonstrate the true nature of the church.

## Opening Prayer

Reading 3: Gracious and Mighty God, we come together as a community, separated by circumstance, but united by your Spirit. We come acknowledging that you are the creator of this world, and you are the redeemer of this world, and you are the sustainer of this world. This evening we ask your blessings upon our gatherings that in our separation, we can find fellowship with you, and in our fellowship with you, we can find our strength.

All: Amen.

## Remembering Jesus at Mealtimes *(read one or more of the following scriptures)*

Reading 4: Luke 5:27-32 – Jesus ate with sinners: We are all forgiven sinners

Reading 5: Luke 9:10-17 – Jesus ate with the 5000: We all share in the abundance of Christ's love.

Reading 6: Luke 19:1-10 – Jesus invites himself to eat with a Tax Collector: Jesus comes to us.

Reading 7: Luke 22:7-13 – Jesus prepares for his Last Supper: We remember Christ's sacrifice.

## Call to Dedication

Reading 8: This evening we hold fast this tie of Christian community and friendship. Therefore, let us dedicate ourselves to the fellowship that binds us to each other and to God. Let us pray:

Almighty God, help us realize that, though we are separated, we are a part of one whole, and we dedicate our lives to each other in loving service for all humanity. May our ties of Christian community and mutual helpfulness bind us as we work toward the fulfillment of your divine purpose in the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God. Amen.

Reading 9: Now let us pray the Lord's Prayer together:

Our Father...

## Celebration of the Bread and Water

Reading 10: Jesus said, "Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." (John 6.32-33). We take this bread as a symbol of the strength that comes from God, remembering that *we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us.*

*(Everyone takes a piece of the bread and eats)*

Reading 11: Jesus said, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." (John 4.13-14). We take

this water as a symbol of the abundant life, love, and friendship shown to us through the example Jesus, who is the Christ.

*(Everyone takes a drink of water)*

## **Concluding Prayer**

Reading 12: Let us pray: Now, O God, we ask your blessing upon this food, that it may nourish us this evening. And we ask your blessing upon our church, that we might be united in our faith. And we ask your blessing upon our world, that you may see all of us through the hardships of these times.

All: Amen.

*(Now enjoy your evening meal)*



## **Walk to Jerusalem by Easter**

**January 12 – April 12**

By the time you read this article, we may already have walked the 6,600+ miles to Jerusalem. Since we expect to get to Jerusalem early, our tour guide, Sue Bonvallet, will be sharing information about what may have been going on in Jerusalem during Jesus' time just before Easter. Please make sure you get all your mileage turned into Linda Backus so we can update the totals.

We hope everyone has enjoyed the journey and devotions that have been shared each week. A wrap-up report will be available in May, and each participant will receive a certificate of completion. Thank you to all who are walking this journey.

In Christ,

The Health Ministry Team

# Lenten Calendar from Habitat for Humanity



Whether we are together or not, we hope you are participating in the Lenten Habitat Calendar event. As you know, the Lenten season means becoming aware of not only the suffering of Christ, but also the suffering of others. Westerville Habitat Partnership (WHP) has a special calendar to help us acknowledge our blessings. On each of the 40 days of Lent, the calendar offers a “giving” opportunity. You can turn your calendar in when the church is open again. Please give it and a check to celebrate your blessings to Bernie Simpkins or Diana Westfall. Make checks payable to WHP.

## New Officers for the Church

Our Nominating Committee is hard at work discerning new elders and deacons for the congregation. They will continue their work, and when we are able to gather again, we will hold a congregational meeting to elect those new officers. Thanks to the Nominating Committee for their work and to those who have agreed to serve, whenever that time comes.

## Reaching out to Refugees Update

Like most of our church programs, this one is on hold. With few, if any, refugees being allowed into the United States at this time, it will likely be a while before we have a refugee family assigned to us. In fact, the Community Refugee and Immigration Services (CRIS) staff was working remotely from their offices in late March and may still be.

But we have good news! At its March meeting, Session voted to give CRIS \$5000 to support its programs. At a time when its budget is greatly stressed and future funding is uncertain, CRIS is very appreciative of our aid. This gift comes from the church’s Mission Fund, which was set up for this purpose.

In the meantime, we have already gathered many of the items for the CRIS Welcome Kit and are happy to receive more of them. Please keep them at your home until the church opens again. You can find an updated list of needed items at this website, thanks to Lizzie Gauen:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/4090c4baaa929abfb6-cris>.

As you know, we must wait to see who is in our family before we gather/purchase some items, such as bed frames and possibly car seats. Many thanks to everyone who has supported this project so far and will in the future! Waiting is difficult, but some things (too many these days) are truly out of our control.

## 2020 Per Capita

### *A Presbyterian Community Fund*

*Per capita* is a set amount of money per member that each congregation pays to the larger Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). It is like a Presbyterian community fund--part of the glue that holds Presbyterians together. Sharing our financial resources with one another is one of the ways that we demonstrate God's love and trust and connection. Sharing enables us to reach beyond what we can see. This year, our church will pay \$37.75 per member (*per capita*).

The Session encourages each of us, if we are able, to contribute the *per capita* amount for our own membership. Doing so allows the Session to use more of our financial resources for mission, programs, and operating expenses. To contribute the \$37.75 *per capita* amount for your membership, just write 'per capita' on your check.

## Backpack Bounty

The Backpack Bounty program is part of our mission to aid local families. Each week, backpacks filled with healthy meals for the weekend are provided to six families at Huber Ridge School. Without this mission, these children and their families are more likely to not have enough to eat during the weekend. Our church youth are an important part of this mission, as they help pack the backpacks each week. It helps them feel like part of the community and emphasizes the need to share God's love and our bounty with those less fortunate.



The menu was developed with a nutritionist and works on a rotating weekly basis. When the church and the schools re-open, you will find copies of the menu on the bulletin board and in the sign-up book in the Gathering Place. All the items requested are nonperishable.

It's easy to participate in this special mission:

- When shopping, simply pick up an extra item or two from the Backpack Bounty menu.
- It doesn't matter which items you bring or in what order, as we have plenty of storage space. We always need canned vegetables and canned fruit!
- Drop off your donations in the green shopping bags in the drop-off area on the ground floor.
- If you would like a periodic reminder, sign up in the book in the Gathering Place.

# Update on 29 West College Property (March 2020)

First Presbyterian Church and the City of Westerville have agreed upon terms for the construction of a new parking lot on the site of the 29 West College property. The written agreement between FPC and the City was approved by Session on February 10. It was approved by the congregation at the Annual Meeting on February 23 and by the Presbytery on March 9.

The City is interested in coordinating their demolition of 32 West College (the old Book Harbor building) with our demolition of 29 West College. This would allow us to bid the projects simultaneously and possibly benefit financially by using the same contractor for both of them.

What's next:

- After the agreement was approved by the Session, the congregation, and the Presbytery, of Scioto Valley, Jim Hines met with the City of Westerville to fine-tune the actual agreement. For example,
  - We requested the ability to reserve the parking lot for our exclusive use for weddings and funerals. The City approved this request
  - We requested clarification of responsibility for snow removal, and the City is verifying what's being done for Church of the Messiah and has agreed to do the same for us. We still have minor details like this to work out.

The timeline:

- The City Manager has suggested that our next step is to obtain City Council approval of the agreement (tentatively planned for April – but this was before the COVID-19 emergency and may be deferred to May).
- Once approved by City Council:
  - The Uptown Review Board needs to approve the demolition of the house. This will be our biggest challenge since its role (goal) is the protection of historic structures within the Uptown District, and they have identified 29 West College as a “significant structure” within Uptown.
  - Interesting enough, the City also needs the Uptown Review Board to approve the demolition of 32 West College (the Old Book Harbor), owned by the City.
- Concurrent with our submission to the Uptown Review Board, we will also submit the parking lot plan to the Westerville Planning Commission in May or June 2020. We don't anticipate any issues with the Planning Commission's approval of the plan.

Our estimated timing (to the best of our collective knowledge) is:

- City Council in April 2020 (unless delayed by the COVID-19 situation)
- Uptown Review in May or June 2020
- Planning Commission also in May or June 2020
- Demolition (tentatively) in LATE FALL – hopefully in October or November
- Parking lot construction in EARLY 2021

As a side note, we are having the legal agreement (lease agreement) with the City reviewed by Attorney Bill Patterson (son-in-law of Bernie and John Simpkins). Jim Hines

## “An Honor” for Our Talented Organist, Lyn Meyer



On March 6-8, Lyn Meyer accompanied the Thomas Worthington High School choir on a trip to perform in the breath-taking Heinz Chapel at the University of Pittsburgh. The trip had been more than a year in the planning. However, Lyn was given only 30 minutes to practice before the concert, in which she played four major pieces on an extremely complex organ with 4272 pipes and three electronic pedal stops. The chapel website says the organ is “the expressive voice of this treasured place that speaks the poetry of music and song for all to enjoy.”

Indeed, not everyone is permitted to play this organ. The chapel staff reviewed Lyn’s background and accomplishments in detail before allowing her to have this once-in-a-lifetime experience.

The chapel itself, based on a Gothic cathedral, is fantastic. Its 48-foot stained glass windows, soaring ceiling, and stone walls result in phenomenal acoustics.

And yes, the Worthington choir also sang, and they, too, were incredible.

Lyn says that playing the organ was a real honor, something she won’t ever forget. During the trip, she and the group also toured Pittsburgh’s Cathedral of Learning and enjoyed a performance by the famed Pittsburgh Symphony. Lyn was grateful that, by chance, the trip had been scheduled just before the coronavirus closed the schools and undoubtedly the chapel. In fact, Lyn and her husband Gary had to leave Pittsburgh before the rest of the group in order to be back in Westerville so she could play for us on Sunday, March 8. That happened to be the last time we were able to worship in our church before the virus closed so many things.

Thank you for being there on the 8<sup>th</sup> and every Sunday, Lyn! We are blessed every time we hear you play!



# A Virtual Garden Tour!

Spring began Thursday, March 19. According to *The Old Farmer's Almanac*, this is the earliest date for spring in 124 years. This day may have slipped by many of us because our attention has been focused on all the changes in our lives caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Still, spring is one of the most beautiful seasons that God has blessed us with. Since we are limited to staying home except for necessary outings, we may not be able to enjoy as many of the emerging flowers, trees, and other signs of spring this year.

To help with that, the Health Ministry Team is planning a Virtual Garden Tour. Medical research has proven that looking at pictures of nature is calming, relaxing, and stress reducing. The American Heart Association recommends exposure to nature as one way to reduce stress. To improve our health, we are asking that you share photos taken with your mobile device of God's beautiful world awakening from winter. These can be photos from your personal garden or yard, a neighborhood yard, a park, or a roadside.

We will be collecting photos until Memorial Day, Monday, May 25. Your contributions can be e-mailed to Linda Backus. Please include your name, the date the photo was taken, and a brief description of the location. Below is an example. Photos will be posted on the church's web site.

Do be safe when taking roadside pictures. We are all amateur photographers, so taking photos in focus is all we ask. Thank you for your participation.



March 22, Daffodils, Backus yard, Genoa Township

## Let's Share Ways We Are Coping

Most of us are spending way too much time at home these days. Some of us are busy telecommuting, while others are searching for positive, productive activities that might enrich our lives and/or the lives of others while safe-guarding our health.

What tips can you offer to the rest of us? What outlook or activity have you found that makes you feel more accepting of this self-isolation? How are you maintaining your relationships with the rest of the world? What have you learned? Where is the thin silver lining in this virus era?

Please send your ideas to Linda Barr. We'll share them in the daily email.

# Coronavirus Relief Fund

## One Great Hour of Sharing

The Presbyterian Church (USA) has announced that it will make available **\$2.7 million** to help with recovery from COVID-19. \$1.7 million is for use within the U. S., and \$1 million is for international relief. Short-term and long-term grant requests will be accepted by Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA). The money is from a PDA reserve fund for major disasters. Most of this money has come from previous One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) campaigns held throughout the denomination each year.

For many years, our church has contributed generously to OGHS. This year, we planned to have our fund drive on Palm Sunday. Since we won't be having a service in the church that day, we are asking any who wish to contribute to mail their contributions to the church, marked for OGHS. The need is still great, to help with current problems and to start replenishing the major disaster fund. This is an opportunity to help when we may be feeling helpless. More information can be found at [pcusa.org](http://pcusa.org).

# Easter Lilies Repurposed

As we adjust to the problems caused by the coronavirus outbreak, we are discovering both new challenges and new opportunities in ministry. One of those challenges that is also an opportunity concerns the Easter lilies. Our tradition is for members to purchase lilies for display at the church on Easter Sunday, after which most people take their lilies home. This year, with an Easter service unlikely, the Worship Elders have proposed that we continue to order Easter lilies and dedicate them to loved ones. This will do two things: One, it will help local business stay afloat during this economic downturn. Second, it will allow families to remember and honor their loved ones. The dedication list will be published in one of our daily emails.

Then, instead of people taking their lilies home, we will have them delivered to area nursing homes and retirement communities where residents are in lock-down. Giving the lilies should cheer up not only our members, but the residents as well. It will be a wonderful outreach ministry of our church. Below is an adjusted order form. If you have already turned in an order form, you do not have to turn in a new one. The cost is \$8.00 per lily.



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## Easter Lily Order Form

If you wish to donate a plant, please print and complete this order form and send it with a check made out to First Presbyterian Church, 41 W College Ave., Westerville, OH 43081. If you are unable to print this order form, please call your deacon for help. Not sure of your deacon? Call Bill Hitt, Deacon Moderator.

**Deadline to order is Palm Sunday, April 5.**

**Easter lilies are \$8.00 each.**

I/We will donate \_\_\_\_\_ lily/lilies                      Total donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

### **Dedication (Name of person/s you wish to remember/honor)**

In memory of \_\_\_\_\_

In memory of \_\_\_\_\_

In honor of \_\_\_\_\_

In honor of \_\_\_\_\_

# Upcoming Events

## By Membership/Evangelism/Events Committee

**\*\*Disclaimer** – At the time of this printing, all events are subject to change or cancellation due to the coronavirus. We are hopeful that we will be able to have these activities and events.



### Gospel Concert – Sunday, May 3, 4:00 pm

The St. Paul's AME Men's Chorus will perform a concert at our church on Sunday, May 3, at 4:00 pm. In the past, this group has filled the room with God's spirit through Gospel music. We know this group will again bring music to move and to bless all who attend! The concert is free.

A light supper with the singers will follow in Fellowship Hall. If possible, please sign up in the church activity binder to help us plan for the meal. Deadline for signing up for the meal is the Sunday before the concert, April 26.

## Summer Activities

Activities are being planned now for this summer, on a tentative basis. No dates have been set; however, the MEE Committee hopes to host some of our past popular activities plus a summer Men's Breakfast.



### JUNE

**\*GOLF OUTING & PICNIC LUNCH @ NORTON'S CABIN**



### JULY

**\*BIKING EVENT** – With longer and shorter biking courses  
**\*MEN'S BREAKFAST**



### AUGUST

**\*CLIPPERS GAME**  
**\*CANOE TRIP**

# Youth Activities

Over the next few weeks, Heather Hicks is creating several videos for all our young friends and their families who are stuck at home due to the coronavirus. These videos will include a scripture lesson for families to read together and an activity to do as a part of the lesson. Heather will be posting these daily videos to our church Facebook group page. You can also follow these videos on YouTube via the channel called Discovery Den (named after Discovery Zone, but for at home). We hope to hear more of what our kids and their families are doing as they stay at home. Please feel free to comment and send pictures so we can all stay connected.

## Photos from Family Game Night Sunday, March 1

“We had lots of fun!” Clearly!





## **Give Your Child an Experience for a Lifetime Send him or her to Church Camp**

**Application Deadline: May 1**

All sorts of summer camps are available for children these days—sports camps, music camps, technology camps—but for a truly life-changing experience, send your child to Church Camp. As many of our children and youth can attest, Church Camp is an experience like no other. Christian Camps combine the wonders of God’s world with the spiritual experience of a close community to give children and youth an encounter with God that they can get nowhere else. Also, most church camps also run camps themed on sports, music, art, and other specialties, which only adds to their appeal. And the costs are reasonable, especially since First Presbyterian Church offers church camp scholarships to children and youth. These scholarships are available thanks to our youth fundraisers, such as the recent Spaghetti Luncheon. But do remember that the deadline to apply is **May 1**. Contact Rev. Gauen or Rev. Hicks to apply for a scholarship.

Below is a list of Ohio Church Camps that our own people have attended—check them out. Let us know if you are sending your child to Church Camp this summer.

### **Camp Christian (Disciples of Christ)**

10335 Maple Dell Rd., Marysville, OH 43040  
(North Central Ohio – about 30 miles from Westerville)  
(937) 348-2845    [www.ccinoh.com](http://www.ccinoh.com)

Camp Christian, in nearby Magnetic Springs, Ohio, runs camps for grade school through high school and a special camp for grandparents and grandkids. Hannah Hauff attended this camp last summer.

### **Kirkmont Camp (Presbyterian)**

6946 Co Road 10, P.O. Box 128, Zanesfield, OH 43360  
(Western Ohio-about 50 miles from Westerville)  
937-593-2141    [www.kirkmontcenter.com](http://www.kirkmontcenter.com)

Kirkmont ministers to our Presbytery. They run summer camp experiences for children from grade school through high school, many with special themes, such as horseback riding and sports. They also have a camp for the whole family in August. Former student minister Betsy Maurath has served on the staff there.

### **Geneva Hills Camp (Independent)**

1380 Blue Valley Rd. SE, Lancaster, OH 43130

(Southeast Ohio- about 50 miles from Westerville)

(740) 746-8439    www.genevahills.com

Geneva Hills belonged to our Presbytery until it was sold in 2008. Now run by the non-profit Geneva Hills Group, the camp runs summer camps for children in grades 3-5. Rev. Gauen and others have taken our youth to retreats at Geneva Hills when it was run by the Presbytery.

Note: Like everything else in these days, church camps are in limbo right now. Still, with the hope of better times ahead, you and your family might consider spending time this summer at a church camp as a wonderful way to grow in faith and in fun.

## **What's in Your Future?**

If you are a high school senior, matriculating college student in a bachelor degree, associate degree or similar level of education, and a member of our church, it is time to think about applying for a First Presbyterian Church of Westerville Education Scholarship.

Let Rev. Gauen know that you would like an application, and he will mail one to as many families as he can. The due date for applications has been extended to Monday, June 15. If you wish to be considered for a 2020 Scholarship, the Scholarship Committee must receive all the following requirements by June 15.

- A fully completed application form (Incomplete applications will not be considered.)
- Two letters of recommendation, one academic and one personal/character
- A copy of your recent grade transcript

An application for a scholarship may be submitted every year that you are a student, but a maximum of two annual scholarships will be awarded per applicant.

We encourage all who are considering post high school education to take advantage of the church's scholarship program. If you would like further information about the program or if you have not received an application, contact [Kathy Krotz](#).

# Fabrics of Faith

It's spring! It's April! Time for our quarterly Fabrics of Faith meeting! Well, not so fast.

As of this writing, all church activities are on hold due to the coronavirus, so we probably won't meet in April. If things change (and we pray that they do, not just for Fabrics of Faith, but for our entire planet), you will hear by a weekly email, a phone call, or perhaps a loud "Amen!" heard throughout the universe.



In the meantime, here's something to do while on "house arrest": Some quilters sent links for volunteers to make facemasks in adult and child sizes. On these websites, not only are there directions, with videos, but information about donating the masks. Most quilters have an abundance of "tightly-woven cotton" (high quality quilt fabric). Flat elastic, 1/8" wide, was available at [www.sewingpartsonline.com](http://www.sewingpartsonline.com). The Turban Project masks use quilt fabric and flannel; Deaconess uses quilt fabric only. Here are the two sites:

[www.Deaconess.com](http://www.Deaconess.com)

[www.turbanproject.com](http://www.turbanproject.com) (Based in Frazeyburg, OH.)

Being productive during "house arrest" is good for us; doing a project that not only keeps you occupied but helps during unsettling times is good for everyone! If you make and donate any masks, please share your experience. It would be good to know that First Presbyterian helped our first responders and the medical personnel on the front lines.

## Missing Item from Fabrics of Faith

In the meantime, Fabrics of Faith needs help in solving a mystery. A recently purchased and costly bolt of white quilt batting belonging to Fabrics of Faith is missing from the Mission Room. When last seen, it was wrapped in a very large yellow plastic bag and sitting next to the metal cabinets in the Mission Room. The size is 4 feet by 12 yards. The batting is essential for making the quilts that Fabrics of Faith gives as gifts to members of our church family. If you have any information about this item, please contact Beckey Stamm, Linda Backus, or any member of Fabrics of Faith.

Thank you!





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Our next Monthly Dine-Out Group, scheduled for April 10, must be cancelled, mostly because all restaurants are closed! Stay tuned for the date of our next get-together, where we will definitely celebrate being able to gather. Questions or suggestions? Contact Jim Hines or Bob Place.

## **Ladies' Night In or Out?**

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We did not meet in March at Holly Harvey's house, as planned, and we must wait for the chaos to clear before we set a date for our next fun evening together. Questions or suggestions? Please contact Diana Westfall.

## **Vegetarian Dining Group**

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Again, we had to cancel the March 14 veggie meal, but we will reschedule as soon as it makes sense. Watch for the announcement, folks! Remember, you don't have to be a vegetarian to enjoy the delicious food and friendly conversation at these meals. For more information, contact Beckey Stamm.

# Be Still and Know That I Am God!

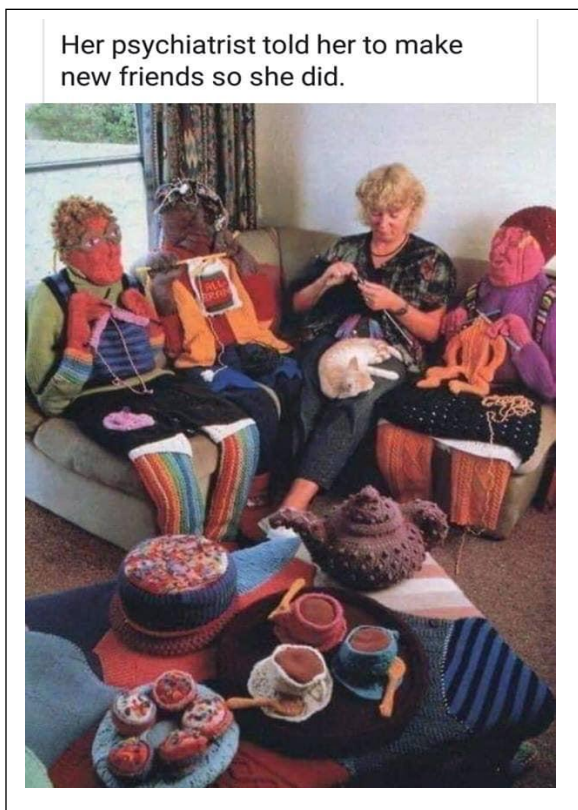
## A personal meditation from Bev Etling

Toward the end of last week, my nephew sent a picture of a wise owl that he heard outside his house. (He is a veteran and suffers from some PTSD.) He said everything at night was so quiet and peaceful, a stark contrast to the crazy world around us right now. It gave him a sense of peace. I responded to him that the wise owl is one of God's special creatures and perhaps a way God is telling him and all of us to 'be still and know that I am God.'



We are in a period of self and forced isolation. The usual noise of a busy society and busy-ness is very quiet. We have slowed down. We have quieted down. We are looking for answers and for calm from our fears. God is with us! Jesus said, "I am with you, always." I say that often. When we were children visiting my dad's sisters, my elderly aunt used to say to my brother and me, "Be still!" She directed that mostly toward my brother, I am sure. But as I got older and heard that Bible verse, I also felt God's Holy Spirit with me when I allowed myself to 'be still.' That awareness of the wise old owl may have indeed been giving wise advice to 'be still' and know God's presence. Whooooo knew!

### Some humor collected by Bev Etling:



# Three Sides of Kindness

*Bill McCormick*

When we think of an anonymous kindness, we normally think of a kindness we received or witnessed by someone whom the recipient didn't know and will probably never know. Usually two, sometimes three, parties are involved in an act of kindness. So which party feels the best about the act? Is it the receiver who benefits in some way by the act? Is it the benefactor who probably feels good about what he/she has done? Or perhaps an observing party may feel good about the fact that there are kind people in the world or may just enjoy seeing someone else's good fortune? Chances are that most of us have been the benefactor, the recipient, or the observer on more than one occasion.

It is difficult to measure the benefit that each of these parties might experience as a result of someone's thoughtfulness. The benefits (and negatives) can be both physical and emotional. The person receiving the kindness might gain some physical benefit such as financial aid, or he/she may be helped with something, such as having someone help change a tire. The benefit received may be emotional, such as knowing someone cares or being cheered up by a friendly greeting from a stranger. In some occasions, however, the situation can have unintended consequences. For example, a cashier thinks a customer might benefit from being asked whether he/she is eligible for the senior discount, but the customer might be annoyed that the cashier thinks he/she is old enough.

Many years ago, before cell phones, a very nice guy I knew felt sorry for a woman standing out in a fierce snowstorm waiting for the bus. So he asked if she'd like a ride. He got such a nasty "you dirty old man" look that he said he'd never make that mistake again. That is one example of the fact that doing something out of love for others may involve some risk of rejection, but the person who truly cares about others is willing to take the risk.

A truly anonymous act of kindness is not done to receive praise for the kindness, or else it would not be done anonymously. We do, however, feel good about doing something for someone else. The old saying that "virtue is its own reward" may seem trite, but it is true.

One could say that there is a likelihood of more than three parties benefitting from a kindness. Sometimes the observer is inspired by the kindness and chooses to extend a kindness to someone else. Or, in some cases, the recipient of someone's generosity may decide to "pay it forward," as the saying goes, thus creating a new recipient.

Just a friendly greeting can be an act of kindness. It seems to me that in recent decades many people are much more likely to be friendly to strangers than they used to be. Perhaps this is because for many of us most of the people we encounter in a day are "strangers."

A poem titled "The Spirit of 34<sup>th</sup> Street" by Peggy L. Shriver describes a beautiful example of anonymous kindness. In it, a rather raggedly dressed woman is riding the subway and trying to warm her bare hands. A young man gets off the subway and disappears, leaving his leather gloves in her lap. Since such acts make the donor and receiver happier, we should all watch for our chance to donate our "leather gloves."

# Adult Growth and Development

ADULT EDUCATION CLASSES AT FIRST PRESBYTERIAN			
Activity	When	Where	What
<b>The Sunday Adult Class</b>	<p><b>As of press time, all of our Adult Education programs have been suspended due to the coronavirus outbreak. However, some classes might resume in a conference format—your class leader will get in touch with you. If you now have time on your hands and would like to join a virtual Adult Ed class, please contact Pastor Gauen as to the status of the class you in which you are interested.</b></p>		The Sunday Adult Class is exploring <i>The Universal Christ</i> , by Richard Rohr.
<b>Tuesday Morning Bible Study</b>			The Gospel of Matthew: We will explore Matthew’s account of the passion of Jesus. Led by Rev. Gauen.
<b>4<sup>th</sup> Monday Discussion Group</b>			We are looking at the formation of the Bible through the book, <i>Inspired</i> , by Rachel Held Evans. Led by Rev. Gauen. Monday, April 27. (maybe)
<b>Circle 4 Women</b>			Our Presbyterian Women’s group meets monthly for fellowship and Bible study. Led by Elaine Foley. Our next class might be on Thursday, April 16.



## Pastor's Page

*“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” – Romans 8:28*

With so much bad news caused by the coronavirus, I wanted to look at some of the good news out there despite the bad news, or even because of it.

For example, I read that, with all this hand washing and social distancing, one health expert expects that there will be many fewer deaths from the regular flu this year. I saw that with the lock-down in Italy, the air quality in many Italian cities has improved dramatically. And I also read that fish and wildlife are returning to the waterways of Venice now that boat traffic there has almost disappeared. See, there are a few silver linings among all the clouds out there.

And maybe we are becoming a little more neighborly. Certainly, the news is full of stories of neighbors reaching out to help neighbors, strangers giving aid to strangers, and people caring for others in general. None of us wants this crisis, if it makes us appreciate each other more, care for each other more, and better see others' humanity, then truly some good has come out of all this. We can only hope that this goodwill will continue through this calamity and beyond it as well.

And some good is coming from having everyone stuck at home. Children and parents are spending time with each other instead of running off here and there to every activity under the sun. Families are taking walks together, playing games together, and getting to know each other. This is a new thing, and a good thing, for many families.

Having this extra time is a good thing for adults as well. It has caused many adults in our church to devote more attention to their spiritual life and find time for a deeper and more focused prayer life. Others are committing themselves to read the Bible regularly. At the beginning of March, I started a sermon series for Lent, planning to spend one Sunday on each of the four gospels. I only managed to get through Matthew and Mark before circumstances forced me to direct my preaching elsewhere. Still, even before this crisis began, several members told me that they were taking me up on the challenge to read one of the gospels for Lent. Now, for those who have extra time on their hands, this might be a good time to tackle one of the four gospels or even two or three. The words of the gospels can bring comfort in these trying times.

Of course, some people are suffering at the hands of this disease, and others because of the economic turmoil the disease has caused. And some must face the dangers of this disease every day in their work. For these people, we may need to be the avenues by which God can work.

The point is that God is still at work all around us and within us. There might be a lot of bad things happening, but God continues to work for good. Thank God that this is true. Amen.

Yours in Christ, Mark

*Presbytery duties in April: The Presbytery office is closed, but the work of the Presbytery continues.*

*The Coordinating Team will meet on April 21, one way or another. I will also be in contact with the Presbytery staff and many of my pastor colleagues as we support each other in this crisis.*