

FAIRPLAIN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

APRIL 2020

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear..., Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."

-Isaiah 51:1-2, NRSV.

Dear friends,

A year ago, I wrote about Holy Saturday, the day after Jesus "descended to the dead." I said, "On Holy Saturday, the deep cut of Good Friday is still raw on our hearts, and we don't know if there will *ever* be an Easter." Ironically, this year there *won't* be an Easter. At least, not in our beloved church's building's sanctuary.

On Holy Saturday, the disciples were just beginning to wrestle with the reality of the new world they lived in. In fact, as late as the evening of Easter Sunday, the disciples were gathered in a locked house "for fear." (Sound familiar?) The disciples were afraid that what had happened to Jesus would happen to them next. They were afraid that, as Jesus had died, they would be next. (Indeed, church tradition says they were all eventually killed for sharing the good news about Jesus).

But then Jesus showed up. "Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.'" In that moment where the doors were locked for fear, Jesus stood in their presence, not as the first victim of many who would die, but as the first *victor* of those who would be resurrected. Colossians 1:18 calls him "the firstborn from the dead."

I am not suggesting we make reckless decisions, as some have. I strongly disagree with those who have pledged to disregard our governor's executive order to shelter in place when possible, especially those who misuse Bible verses in their argument. Jesus does not call us to intentionally risk our lives for no reason and call it "faith." Unfortunately, if I walk off a cliff and say I am "trusting God to protect me," my "trust" is not likely to change the laws of physics. Joseph Garlington, a former pastor of mine, used to say that if you make dangerous and unwise decisions, you'll still go to heaven – in fact, you'll get there sooner.

But there is a wide gulf between fear and reasonable caution. While we are sheltering in place, we do not need to let fear take hold of us, just as many of us are not afraid when we put on our car seat belts. We are taking reasonable precautions, even as we remember that "In life and in death we belong to God."

If it feels like staying home isn't helping, know that it is! But if you want to do more, I would invite us to pray for those on the front lines: health workers, grocery store employees, mail carriers, sanitation workers, and those in authority making decisions that affect all of our lives. Also pray for those whose lives will be hardest-hit by this crisis, like the homeless, those without medical insurance, and those living paycheck-to-paycheck.

Peace be with you.

Rev. David M. Schell, Pastor

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APRIL BIRTHDAYS

6: Melissa Cobb
9: Bud Cornelius
10: Dave Durr
12: Dr. Charles Duncan
21: Marlene Smith
22: Sandy Welch
22: Becky Hungerford
24: George Pica

MUSIC NEWS

Greetings to all from James 5:13

“Are any among you in trouble? They should pray. Are any among you happy? They should sing praises.”

There were 5 Sundays in March. The following music groups and soloists embellished our Worship experience last month:

March 01 – Men’s Chorus

March 08 – The Praise Band “Wherever Two ...”

March 15 – Vladimir Slavujevic vocal and instrumental solos

March 22 – Family Slavujevic vocal, Chimes & Bells

March 29 – (A guest soloist or Vladimir Slavujevic)

Since March 15 due to the virus pandemic our regular church meetings are now streamed online. The choir is also a “victim of circumstances beyond our control.” We have not had our rehearsals on March 18 and March 25. As soon as The Michigan Health Authorities allow, we will resume our meetings. We will continue to produce music but with less variety of performers. My family has been and will be heavily involved during this period.

We asked our new pianist Muyu Zou to write his short biography. You can read it in this issue of the Newsletter.

May God show His mercy upon the whole world during this time of global crisis.

Vladimir Slavujevic,
Director of Music

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HOLY WEEK SERVICES

Palm Sunday, April 5: 9:30 am Worship Service, "Live Streaming"

Maundy Thursday, April 2, 6:00 pm with First Presbyterian Church has been cancelled

Easter Sunday, April 12: 9:30 am Worship Service, "Live Streaming"

ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING

Around the world, millions of people lack access to sustainable food sources, clean water, sanitation, education and opportunity. The three programs supported by One Great Hour of Sharing include Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, the Presbyterian Hunger Program, and Self-Development of People.

1. Disaster Assistance works alongside communities as they recover and find hope after the devastation of natural or human-caused disasters, and support for refugees. They receive 32% of funds raised.
2. Hunger Program takes action to alleviate hunger, care for creation, and the systemic causes of poverty so all may be fed. They receive 36% of funds raised.
3. Self-Development of People invests in communities responding to their experiences of oppression, poverty and injustice and educates Presbyterians about the impact of these issues. They receive 32% of funds raised.

The offering will be received on Easter Sunday, April 12. Please make your check payable to Fairplain Presbyterian Church – on memo please indicate: OGHS and mail your check to the church office.



SOUP KITCHEN

Thursday, March 12th, was a busy lunchtime at the Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen. Dealing with the Coronavirus issue, we were rather uncertain just how many people to prepare for. As it turned out, we served 96 adults and 2 children.

The menu included hot dogs and baked beans, buttered bread, salad, an individual bag of a pretzel snack mix, applesauce, cookies and a choice of juice or mild.

Our volunteers were Leslie Gilreath, Eloise Gundersen, George Pica, Lew Burchard, John Kaufman, Pastor David and Julie Nash.

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PARISH LIFE EVENTS

The Parish Life Committee has come new events in the works, but we have suspended them until a later date. Until then, we are taking the recommendation of the State of Michigan and CDC practice social distancing. Please see Clerk's Corner below for some events we are planning.

CLERK'S CORNER

Membership as of 3/24/2020 is 86 active members.

Attendance average for February was 44 people in worship.

Communion was served to 34 during worship on February 2, and to 4 at home.

Session made **several decisions** last night at our teleconferenced meeting on March 24, that concern the operations of the church during the next month.

1. We **will continue streaming** the worship service from Rev. Schell's home. Kristen will take care of the camera while Rev. Schell does the service. His degree in film editing is looking like it will come in handy as he will piece together the various parts of the service. They make a good team!
2. We **will continue to stay closed based on our state Governor's recommendations**. At this point her recommendation is, reopening on Monday, April 13. We will move that forward if so mandated by the Governor.
3. There will be **no home visitation or communion** during the stay-at-home order.
4. Session has divided up the membership of the church so as **to call every member** (every week if you so desire) to check on your well-being.
5. **Palm Sunday will include a "virtual" communion**. If you wish to join in, have your bread and juice ready at home on April 5.
6. The **Soup Kitchen** will be handled by several people preparing paper bag lunches and the bags then dropped off at the Soup Kitchen to be distributed.

The Parish Life Committee has met, and have several events planned. At this point nothing has a date attached to the plan, but we know this isolation will end, and they wanted you to know what they are planning. The **Easter Cookie Decorating Class** is obviously not going to work this year, but we might be able to work in a different topic/theme in the future.

Supper for 6 or 8 can be held in the home of the host, or in the church. The host will provide the main entrée and others can sign up to bring an appetizer, side dish or dessert.

Game Night will be held in the Courtyard with appetizers and beverages.

Kristen Schell, Candi Keschull and Linda Cogswell (the Parish Life Committee) are looking into other options in the community, perhaps a **speaker** coming to the church for demonstration, or possibly **theater/music event** to attend.

Consider this an opportunity to **respond** to the committee about the events already planned. Let Kristen, Candi or Linda know about any ideas you might have. As contented as I have been

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so far during this isolation, when I typed this information about the parish life events, I found myself excited about the possibility of getting back to normal.

A WORD FROM MUYU ZOU

My name is Muyu, "Zou" is my family name, in Chinese, they call me "邹慕瑀", and I am a pureblood Chinese. I was born on January 21, 1997, in a countryside named "Gaoan", which is my grandparents' house, and they are still staying there until now. I and my parents stay in a county two hours far from my grandparents' house called "Huaan", which is my sweet home, until now, I miss it a lot. I was born in an Adventist family, my father decided to become a Christian after he got married to my mother, but my father is the only Christian in his family. My father is a graphic designer who does the designs for Chinese religion books, and he is a great artist painter too. My mother is a church worker, works as a manager for different church activities, a teacher in church junior class, and one of the church members' visitors as well.

Not like others, I started to stay piano when I was 14 years old, kind of late, but God has his plans for me. Jumping backward in time, my parents sent me to a Bible school named "Xinxiangyuan" when I was going to be a 6th-grade elementary student, I was 13-year-old during the time. After one year of study in the school, a new music teacher decided to teach in the school, luckily, the music teacher is my father's good friend when they were young; so my father visit the school and ask me if I am interested to stay piano with the music teacher, but before that, nobody knows that I had the talents in music. Back home after one and a half years of stay in the Bible school, I go to public school in my hometown, and that was the time that I started to stay piano officially. Go abroad was one of my big dreams at the time, I finally got the chance in 2013 after I went to a music camp in a city in China called "Shenzhen". I met a music professor from a college in Philippine, after seeing my piano performance, she invited me to the school and promised me that she going to teach me piano. Even though I just finished one year of high school during the time, but I don't want to just give up the chance to stay music and piano abroad, so I packed my bags and went to the college called Central Philippine Adventist College (CPAC) in Philippine, took "piano pedagogy" degree, and graduated in March 25, 2018. By God's plans and grace, I applied and got accepted from Andrews University in April 2018; but I was facing a big problem with my visa because I got denied once in Philippine when I was trying to visit the US and AU. It is extremely hard for Chinese people to get approved if they got US visa to deny even for once. But, the miracle happened, I got approved, and packed my bags again headed to the US and directly to Andrews University. When I was facing the US visa officer, I don't feel nervous, because I know God always guides my life step by step. I am taking a Master's degree in Piano Performance now, and anticipating to graduate in 2021.

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I am always alone in all of my educational trips abroad, but I never feel afraid when I face things and my life because I know that God is always behind me, and holding my hands all the time, telling me how and what to do. I don't have any strong musical family backgrounds or great musical talents, but I am grateful all the time for everything that I have.

Got accepted as a pianist and singer in Fairplain Presbyterian Church is my pleasure, I am not the best musician, but I am always doing my best for what I need to do. I am not a perfect human being, so please don't feel hesitate to give me advice. I felt so much cares from you, I am thankful for you and the opportunities that you gave. May God bless each one of us, and our worship services every Sunday.



DEACONS OUTREACH

YELLOW PEW ENVELOPES

As you will notice in the pews, the yellow envelopes have been reprinted for your donations toward Deacons General/Funeral Fund and Food Pantry/Soup Kitchen.

Deacons General Fund:

Goes towards the purchase of communion cups, oil for candles, Advent wax candles, flowers for shut-ins (Christmas and Easter), printed support materials for members: These Days devotional, Care Notes (various topics), greeting cards and postage for members; CD players for shut-ins.

Deacons Funeral Fund:

Goes towards any funeral luncheon expenses that are not reimbursed by the family.

Donations to the Deacons General Fund and/or Funeral Fund should be made payable to Fairplain Presbyterian Church.

Food Pantry:

To purchase products we are low on, or take advantage of good sales on products, we normally furnish in food bags from our local retail grocer.

Soup Kitchen:

To purchase the needed side dishes for our once-a-month meals we prepare at the soup kitchen in Benton Harbor.

Donations to the Food Pantry and/or Soup Kitchen should be made payable to the Community Food Pantry at Fairplain Presbyterian Church.

CHURCH STAFF

The Rev. David Schell, pastor@fairplainpc.com

Linda Cogswell, Church Secretary – church email: office@fairplainpc.com

The church office is temporarily closed until April 13

Vladimir Slavujevic, Director of Music – email: vladoslavujevic@yahoo.com

Muyu Zou, Pianist – email: raining1@gmail.com

Jenna McAllister, Treasurer – email: jennabetz@comcast.net

Jill Wendel, Financial Secretary – email: jillannwendel@yahoo.com

Bud Cornelius, Custodian