

FAIRPLAIN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

JUNE 2020 NEWSLETTER

While staying with them, Jesus ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. -Acts 1:4a

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. -Acts 2:1

Dear friends,

We humans don't generally do waiting well – especially we 21st-century humans. We can go from pulling into the drive through to eating our breakfast in four minutes flat, like Kristen and I did this morning. Pushing a lawn mower around our yard takes too long, so we get riding mowers. Especially long activities, like making a crock-pot meal might take all day. (Thank God it doesn't take active *work* all day!)

In Acts 1, Jesus tells his disciples to get hunker down for a wait. He doesn't tell them how long. He says it will be ended when some... thing... that they don't quite understand what, happens, but hopefully they'll know it when they see it. Sound familiar?

That time, eventually, turns out to be Pentecost. It's 49 days after the resurrection. Forty. Nine. Days.

That's a long time to wait. It's not as long as we have all been waiting to gather together in person in worship again, but a long time nonetheless. Christ is risen (Christ is risen indeed!) but Jesus tells them to *wait*. Don't go out, *don't* spread the gospel, just... wait. He doesn't say how long, just "until you've received power from on high" (Luke 24:29).

In the meantime, they are devoting themselves to prayer "constantly" (Acts 1:14), and they find a new officer, so to speak – a replacement for Judas (Acts 1:15-26).

We are definitely "in the meantime" right now. Waiting for this pandemic to pass over. Trying to occupy ourselves, trying to get through it somehow. But a friend had this piece of advice from Alfred D. Souza on her refrigerator years ago, and it's stuck with me:

For a long time it had seemed to me that life was about to begin - real life. But there was always some obstacle in the way, something to be gotten through first, some unfinished business, time still to be served, a debt to be paid. Then life would begin. At last it dawned on me that these obstacles were my life.

This advice has come back again and again in my life, and it can be especially helpful when we start thinking about all the things we'll do "when this is over." But though this is a period of waiting, it is also a period of living. So live how you want to have lived in this context.

Or as Annie Dillard said, "How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives." Even our days in a pandemic.

Rev. David Schell

BIRTHDAYS

- 15 – Sally Durr
- 17 – Chris Paine
- 20 – Jack Stuber
- 24 – Jane Nettleton

MUSIC NEWS

Greetings to all from Hebrews 2:12

“I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises.”

Here is what pre-recorded special music was used in May for our online worship services:

- May 03 – Vladimir Slavujevic vocal solo
- May 10 – The Praise Team “Wherever Two ...”
- May 17 – Men’s Chorus
- May 24 – Muyu Zou

A month ago, we were hoping that our self-isolation and physical distancing would end by Memorial Day. But it was not the case. We are praying that our life in Michigan would return somehow to normal this summer.

For the past 2 years our church was hosting my annual Spring Music Studio Recitals. They were afternoons when close to 100 persons (students, family members, friends and our church members) enjoyed much religious and classical music performed by my young music students. Due to a record number of students this year, we were planning 2 music studio recitals – one on April 26 and another on May 31. Both these events were cancelled due to the pandemic. Hope next spring we will be able to organize such an event.

Since the time we stopped having Wednesday rehearsals and Sunday worships in person about 2 months ago, my family (all 5 of us) has spent an average of 2 hours every week practicing new and reviewing old favorites. We are now ready to perform any time 7 Choir anthems, 6 Ladies’ Chorus songs, 3 brand-new Chimes & Bells songs and several vocal and instrumental songs. Every week we add more music to our repertoire.

Here is an interesting article about a well-known hymn “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing” (# 356 in our church hymnal) adopted from Randy Petersen’s book “Be Still My Soul.”

Raw emotion rips through this hymn. Once you steer through its thick poetry and archaic diction, you find the impassioned yearning of a soul hanging on to God for dear life. “Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it” – we all feel it, don’t we? This text taps into the daily struggles of the believer’s journey.

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Born in Swaffham, England, Robert Robinson lost his father at an early age and went to work as a barber's apprentice at age 14. (His mother hoped he'd become a priest but couldn't afford the education.) On a lark, the 17-year old Robert went to hear evangelist George Whitefield in London. The year was 1752, and Whitefield had already become famous in Britain and America for his dramatic fervor and simple message about the need to be born again. On this occasion he preached from Matthew 3 on the need for repentance. Deeply moved, Robinson spent the next 2 ½ years agonizing over his decision, but he finally said "yes" to Jesus. In the flyleaf of his Bible he wrote a brief testimony (in Latin!): "After tasting the pain of renewal for 2 years and 7 months, I found full absolution and grace through the precious blood of Jesus Christ."

He stayed in London the next few years, growing in his newfound faith, hearing some great preachers (including John Wesley), training for the ministry, and writing poetry. In 1758 he was asked to serve at a Calvinistic Methodist chapel, and in the next year moved to an independent church and later on to a Baptist congregation. It was about this time that Robinson wrote "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing."

Still a young man, he had experienced several major changes in a short time – going from the barber shop to the pulpit, from skepticism to faith and then to ministry. You could forgive him for feeling a bit overwhelmed. This hymn captures the honest expression of a faith-in-progress. He may be "fixed upon" the mount of God's love, but he's still "prone to wonder." He recognizes he's a "great ... debtor" to God's grace, and he asks God to "bind my wandering heart to Thee."

The second verse in its original form starts with "Here I raise my Ebenezer ..." *Ebenezer* ("rock help") was the monument set up by the prophet Samuel to commemorate a repentance-induced victory: "Up to this point the Lord has helped us!" the prophet explained (1 Samuel 7:12). Robert Robinson shares the sentiment. God has helped so far, but tomorrow is another day. Let's keep pressing on in this journey, hoping "safely to arrive at home."

Wishing you and all your loved ones God's protection and guidance, good health, courage, patience, endurance, enthusiasm, wisdom and motivation during this critical time.

Vladimir Slavujevic
Director of Music



CLERK'S REPORT – JUNE 2020

I hope this finds all of you well and coping mentally with a different kind of life with the "Stay at Home" orders. Personally, I am getting exercise every day and finding all kinds of projects to complete since I'm not spending a lot of time driving someplace.

Membership as of May 19, is 86 active members. Attendance for April and May is measured a bit differently. We are measuring by the number of "devices" that tune into our live streaming. Devices could be a cell phone, a tablet, a computer, or a television.

April 5 - 35 devices
April 12 - 47 devices
April 19 - 33 devices

April 26 - 46 devices
May 3 - 35 devices
May 10 - 37 devices

Home Communion was not served in March, but virtual Communion was presumably served to worshipers in 35 locations in April.

Yesterday, May 24, we moved the live streaming of our church service to our sanctuary. On Friday the 21st of May, the Governor stated that groups of 10 or under could gather. We decided that allowed us to have Pastor David, a lay person, Bill Cundiff on the computer, J. Michael Hall on the sound board, Muyu Zou on the piano and Vlad doing music with enough room for additional people if necessary. It was nice to see our Sanctuary again.

Various members are weeding the gardens at church, mowing the lawn, and taking care of the outside of the building in our absence. Bud continues to do a check of the interior of the building several times a week.

Try to think positive thoughts, don't listen to the news except once a day, and then for only a few minutes. Bad news can affect your positive thoughts and once you hear the news, no sense in listening to the same stuff over and over.

Prayers for each of you,
Marlene Smith, Clerk



The Soup Kitchen is not having clients come into the building, so we are packing bag lunches and delivering them to the Soup Kitchen.

Jill Wendel, Leslie Gilreath, Julie Nash, Deb Morris, Ann Williams, Kim Edinger, Vicki Born and Marlene Smith each prepared 22 bags for a total of 175 bags.

We supplied a water bottle, a turkey sandwich, a fruit cup, dessert, and a bit of candy along with a napkin and spoon in each bag. I have to say, it's not as much fun as nine of us meeting in the actual soup kitchen and preparing and serving a meal, but we still enjoy knowing that the clients will get a nourishing, filling meal.

We want to thank John Kauffman for providing the turkey, fruit cups, dessert, and candy from the Fairplain Presbyterian Food Pantry.

- Marlene Smith

DEACONS

YELLOW PEW ENVELOPES

The yellow envelopes have been reprinted for your donations toward Deacons General/Funeral Fund and Food Pantry/Soup Kitchen and are in the pews. Since we're not worshipping in the church building until the stay-home-stay-safe order is lifted, you can just make a note in the memo line of a check mailed to the church.

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.

Checks for donations to the Deacons General Fund and/or Funeral Fund should be made payable to Fairplain Presbyterian Church. Include "Deacons" in the memo line.

CHURCH STAFF

The Rev. David Schell, pastor@fairplainpc.com

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

Church Office is closed at this time due to Stay-at-Home order from our governor/

We will publish hours again once the church office is re-opened.

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