

# FAIRPLAIN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

## APRIL 2021 NEWSLETTER

*And all the people responded with a great shout when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. But many of the priests and Levites and heads of families, old people who had seen the first house on its foundations, wept with a loud voice when they saw this house, though many shouted aloud for joy,*

*Ezra 3:11-12*

Dear friends,

The verse above is from Ezra, a book of the Bible about the people of God returning from exile. After centuries in a hostile, foreign land, they have been allowed to return home. They work to rebuild the temple of God in Jerusalem that was destroyed by their enemies and burned to the ground. When the foundations are laid, there are two reactions: Shouts of joy, and loud weeping in sorrow.

As you may know by now, barring new developments to prevent it, we plan to return to in-person worship on April 18, 2021. (Read the Clerk's Report on page 3 for details). But it's going to be different.

You and your friends from church will be wearing masks – that is, if you feel comfortable coming at all. We will not be singing, at least at first. We will be seated at least six feet apart from one another. There will not be a choir yet. But it is a foundation. It's a start.

These changes may make us feel conflicted – both joy at being able to return and see the faces of our beloved fellow members, and sorrow as we see how many of us have not yet returned, either because they do not yet feel safe, or because they have gone home to be with God. Joy at presence in the building, and sorrow at being unable to sing and having to wear masks. Joy and sorrow mixed together.

You are not required to come. No one is required to come, and no one will be seen as less spiritual for staying home from church to protect themselves from a deadly virus. We've all been doing it for the past year. Online worship will continue to be available.

Joy and sorrow will be mixed in the coming month, and in the coming year. Happiness mixed with hardship; beauty mixed with ashes. And there's no need to refuse to feel the sorrow just because joy seems preferable. As a former therapist of mine told me, they're all connected. If we refuse to feel the sorrow, we can't feel the joy either.

So feel them. Feel them both; or feel whichever you feel when you feel it.

I cannot wait to see you.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David M. Schell'.

Rev. David M. Schell, pastor

# OUR CHURCH FAMILY

## PRAYER REQUESTS

If you have prayer requests that you would like to leave as a voicemail to be played on Sunday morning, you can call 269-332-1118 to leave a message, and we will play it on Sunday morning.



Please join our virtual coffee hour at 10:45am Sundays. You will receive a link if you are subscribed to our email newsletters. You can subscribe at <https://www.fairplainpc.com/newsletters/>.

## BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENTS

Heidi Camille Mulcahy was born on February 25, 20" long, and weighing 7 lb. 2 oz. Parents are Christine & Branigan Mulcahy, and maternal grandparent is Jenna McAllister.

Congratulations to the entire family!



## APRIL BIRTHDAYS

6: Melissa Cobb

22: Sandy Welch

10: Dave Durr

22: Becky Hungerford

12: Dr. Charles Duncan

24: George Pica

21: Marlene Smith

## CLERK REPORT – MARLENE SMITH

At Session's March meeting it was decided to reopen our sanctuary for worship on Sunday mornings beginning April 18, at 9:30. It is exciting to look forward to seeing everyone in person, but we still need to be careful and cautious about how we interact, until more people are vaccinated and the variants are under control. Session has thoughtfully put together some guidelines that we want to share with all of you.

1. We are **NOT** going to ask you if you have been vaccinated, but we strongly encourage vaccinations to protect others as well as yourself.
2. You must wear a mask while in the church building.
3. We are going to take reservations at the start to make sure we can seat everyone in a physically distanced manner. Please call the church office any day prior to the Sunday you want to attend. If Linda is not there, just leave a message with your name and phone number, so Linda can call you back to confirm your reservation.
4. There is a table by the Courtyard door where you will be checked in and your temperature taken. Either Kim Edinger or Judy Kuhlman will be at that table.
5. You may arrive up to 15 minutes prior to worship so that you have time to be checked in and find a seat.
6. There will be sanitizer bottles in various places: at check in, at the door of the sanctuary, and some small bottles are in the pew-back racks.
7. The offering plate will **NOT** be passed, but will be a basket in the narthex at the back of the sanctuary.
8. Once you are in the sanctuary, you will see that the pews are taped off. A bulletin will be set on the places where you may be seated.
9. For the time being, we are **NOT** going to be singing. There will be hymns played and the words posted, and you may hum to the music. The CEO of Spectrum/Lakeland has distinctly stated that singing spreads whatever comes out of your mouth.
10. We encourage you to chat, smile, say hello, but do not hug, shake hands or be close physically.
11. When we leave the sanctuary, the liturgist will dismiss people starting at the back pews. Please stay physically distanced as you leave the building.
12. Pastor Schell will be outside the Courtyard door to greet you at the end of worship—distantly.

As of March 22, 2021, we have 79 active members, who are about to become more active than they have been in one long year. The Book of Order states that a church needs to serve Communion only four times during the calendar year. For that reason, we are not going to serve Communion in May and will decide going forward when and how to serve Communion.

For those who choose not to attend at this time, we will still stream from Youtube so you can enjoy the service from the safety of your own home. We will continue streaming our services indefinitely, as we were before the pandemic. We do look forward to worshipping together some day.



**PALM SUNDAY, MARCH 28:** Live Streaming Worship Service at 9:30 am. Palms will be carried in during the Prelude.

**MAUNDY THURSDAY, APRIL 1:** From 4-6 pm, we will hold prayer stations in the Courtyard. No more than seven people at a time; prayer stations will be more than 6 feet apart, and no more than one family per station.

**EASTER SUNDAY, APRIL 4:** Live Streaming Worship Service at 9:30 am. Muyu will be playing Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee for the Prelude and Handel's Hallelujah Chorus for the Postlude. Family Slavujevic will perform two pieces of Easter music, one signing and one using chimes, bells and singing.

## ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING

Around the world millions of people lack access to sustainable food sources, clean water, sanitation, education, and opportunity. Three programs supported by OGHS is the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, the Presbyterian Hunger Program, and Self-Development of People. All work in different ways to serve individuals and communities in need. From initial disaster response to ongoing community development, their work fits together to provide people with safety, sustenance and hope.

The offering will be received on Easter Sunday, and provides a way to share God's love with our neighbors in need. Please submit your check to Fairplain Presbyterian Church, memo: OGHS and mail to the church office at 210 W. Napier Avenue, Benton Harbor MI 49022.



## MUSIC NEWS

Greetings to all from Revelation 15:3

*They held harps given them by God and sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb: "Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages."*

The following music groups warmed our hearts during our Worship services in March:

March 07 – Family Slavujevic Chimes & Bells and Vocal Ensemble

March 14 – Family Glanz (ukulele, guitar and voices)

March 21 – Praise Band "Wherever Two ..."

March 28 – Family Herivonjy (guitar and voices)

It is my joy and privilege to introduce to you 2 new international families who performed music during the month of March as volunteers. Family Glanz comes from The Netherlands / Germany / Brazil. In September their young daughter started taking ukulele lessons with me. Her father plays the guitar and mother joins them as a singer. Family Herivonjy comes from Madagascar (a large island east of Africa). Their eldest son started taking guitar lessons with me in September. Two other younger boys join their parents in singing.

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Here is an interesting article about the origin of a well-known hymn "The Day of Resurrection!" (# 118 in our Church Hymnal) adopted from the book "Be Still My Soul" by Randy Petersen.

If you could sit down and chat with John of Damascus, the author of this hymn, you might find a number of things to disagree with. He might challenge you on a few matters as well, and he wouldn't be shy about doing so. Yet throughout the discussion, you would come to realize that this man was passionate about worshipping God in spirit and in truth.

John lived in a strange time and place. The Muslims had swiftly risen to power in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, taking control of the Middle East and North Africa. In some areas, they coexisted quite peacefully with Christians. Originally from Damascus, John actually held office in the court of the Muslim caliph as an advocate for Christian interests in the region, a position he inherited from his affluent father.

Trained as a theologian, he wrote many books debunking the heresies of the time. He criticized falsehood wherever he saw it, even among Christian leaders. On occasion, the Muslim caliph actually protected him from angry Christians. In 716, John resigned his post and joined a monastery near Jerusalem, continuing to write controversial works on Christian teaching and practice. (He also criticized Islam, considering it a heretical development of Christianity.)

Article continued on Page 6 ...

He was also a poet and an art lover. He strongly defended the use of icons in worship, arguing that it reminded worshipers that Christ had taken on flesh and come to the material world. Then, as now, people kept trying to turn Christian faith and worship into an ethereal, nonphysical act. John was sold on the notion that we are physical beings worshiping an incarnate Lord with our material bodies.

A number of his poetic writings have been adopted for use in Greek Orthodox liturgy. Two hymns – “Come, Ye Faithful, Raise the Strain” and this one – have found even wider use. The words of “The Day of Resurrection!” are the first ode in a collection of John’s works, often used in Orthodox Christian churches in a candle-lighting service just past midnight on Easter morning after the announcement of the Resurrection. As the day of Christ’s resurrection begins, candle meets candle, and soon the whole church is blazing with light.

Even today, some people interpret the Resurrection as a merely spiritual event. They’ll buy the idea that Jesus lives on in our hearts but consider it archaic to think that Jesus’ body actually came back to life. John of Damascus knew better. The miracle of miracles that brought our Savior back from the dead continues to fill our lives with “resurrection light.”

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May God bless us all, grant us wisdom, protection, guidance, good health, prosperity, and opportunity to be a blessing to others.

Vladimir Slavujevic  
Director of Music



## SECRETARY SUPPLY



While Linda Cogswell is on vacation the following ladies will be in the church office from 9 am-noon. The office will be closed on Tuesday, May 4 and 11, and Wednesday, May 5 and 12.

Thursday, April 29: Amy Reutlinger

Monday, May 10: Linda Zitta

Friday, April 30: Amy Reutlinger

Thursday, May 13: Amy Reutlinger

Monday, May 3: Linda Zitta

Friday, May 14: Amy Reutlinger

Thursday, May 6: Volunteer

Monday, May 17: Judy Kuhlman

Friday, May 7: Volunteer



A total of 100 meals were prepared and packed for the Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen on Thursday, March 11 by volunteers Sonja Stormo, Vicki Born, Amy Reutlinger and Julie Nash. Lunches included a turkey sandwich, one back each of snack mix munchies and Sun chips, a box of raisins, a cup of applesauce, Oreo cookies, a small candy bar and a bottled water. Thank you to John and Jill for providing everything needed to make these lunches possible and to those who prepared them.

- Julie Nash

## MISSION STATEMENT

*We, the members of Fairplain Presbyterian Church, rejoice in God's grace and redeeming love through Jesus Christ. We believe we have been called as God's children to create an open and welcoming community, to worship and praise God, and to nurture and support each other. We are called to develop our God-given gifts and to equip ourselves to reach out to the world in love and compassion. Thus prepared, we will share our faith, preach the gospel, feed the hungry, and be peacemakers according to God's will.*



## DEACONS

**These Days Request:** If you would like a copy of the current January – March These Days devotionals, please contact the church office and speak to Linda.

### **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](mailto:pastor@fairplainpc.com)

Linda Cogswell, Church Secretary – church email: [office@fairplainpc.com](mailto:office@fairplainpc.com)

Vladimir Slavujevic, Director of Music – email: [vladimirslavujevic5@gmail.com](mailto:vladimirslavujevic5@gmail.com)

Muyu Zou, Pianist – email: [ranking1zou@gmail.com](mailto:ranking1zou@gmail.com)

Jody Pauley, Nursery Attendant – email: [jodypauley1@gmail.com](mailto:jodypauley1@gmail.com)

Jenna McAllister, Treasurer – email: [jennabetz@comcast.net](mailto:jennabetz@comcast.net)

Jill Wendel, Financial Secretary – email: [jillannwendel@yahoo.com](mailto:jillannwendel@yahoo.com)

Bud Cornelius, Custodian

## **CHURCH OFFICE HOURS**

Linda Cogswell, Church Secretary, is in the church office during the following days/hours:

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday: 8:30 am-noon and 1:00-3:00 pm

Wednesday: Church Office closed

Friday: 9:00 am-11:30 am