



The First Presbyterian Church of Mt. Holly, NJ

Gray Matters

By Rev. Barry Gray

MAY 2020

As I write this in the middle of April, I am still hoping for God's grace to prevail with us all through our time of quarantine and social distancing. You are all in my thoughts and prayers. Our church staff and officers continue to diligently seek The face of God for wisdom and understanding as we continue to pursue God's mission to the world.

I encourage you to take advantage of all our online services of worship and prayer and while I wish we could be together in person, at this point it's just not an option. I hope that those of you who are comfortable using social media will take it upon yourself to call those that don't use it and let them participate with you over the phone. May God pour out his Holy Spirit in even greater ways in our lives than we have ever experienced him before!

Many of my colleagues have been debating over the issue of serving the Lord's Supper remotely while we're worshipping online, and it seems like we are pretty evenly divided about the theological implications. Personally, I believe that a rigorous theology of place and of presence should guide us.

Without getting too deeply into it, for me a theology of place does not necessarily mean we have to be in the church building, but it does mean that we should be in the same place physically to share in the fellowship of the Lord's table as surely as Jesus was together with his disciples when he instituted this sacrament.

Because we believe the Lord's Supper is a sacrament (a sign and seal of the work of God in us) and not simply an ordinance (a rule to follow) we believe the real spiritual presence of Christ is among us as we partake of the elements together to minister to us in a very special way. So when I think of presence, for me it includes both our being present (why when we serve home communion we send the servers out two by two as representatives of the whole local assembly) gathered together around the Lord's Table to experience his presence as his body here on earth.

It is for these reasons I have chosen to not administer the Lord's Supper until we can physically meet together again. It is my plan that the first Sunday we are released to meet again physically will be a communion Sunday to celebrate the Lord's Supper together as the gathered body of Christ.

You all received a mini update on the new pastor search along with our completed Church Information Form. We have received 8 inquiries for the position so far. After reviewing the Transitional Cohort prescriptions, 3 have decided not to pursue a call here at this time. The 5 we are currently considering are all

(Continued on page 3)

May Birthdays

01	Kathy Kibler	16	Donald Morgan
03	Deborah Burke	16	Jonathan Wishart, Jr
04	Haley Bunting	17	Ray Markley
06	Luinie Taylor	18	Karin Gray
08	Debbie Ketels	20	Terry Schuh
08	Louise Cross	20	Barbara Ramos
09	Robert D'Entremont	23	John Vytowich
09	Christopher Jones	29	Sheryl Markley
10	Carol Winner	30	Bettyann Melvin
12	Linda Taylor		

May Anniversaries

08	Stephen and Nancy Jones
15	Larry and Linda Taylor
15	Ron and Sara Traver
21	Michael and Brenda Monaco
26	Steven and Deborah Burke

Servants of the Lord: The Congregation



Servants of the Servants:

Barry Gray
Pastor

Rick Hamilton
Assistant Minister

Haley Bunting
Director of Next Generation Ministries

Jackie Bozarth
Organist and Director of Choirs

Brian Taylor
Praise Band and Worship Leader

Harry Cunningham
Building Supervisor & Sexton

Jan Delgado
Director of Community Lunch

Barbara Biedenbach
Administrative Assistant

Gretchen Bisbort
Financial Secretary

First Presbyterian Church

125 Garden Street
Mount Holly NJ 08060
609-267-0330



Church Office Email:

fpc.mtholly@gmail.com

Church Website:

www.firstpresmtholly.org

FROM THE EDITOR

Articles should be **submitted by the 15th of the preceding month** to the church office so that staff can review and get the material included in the following month's edition. I can be reached at:

Robert Van Der Kamp
609-668-3557

bobvdk@yahoo.com

The Vision of First Presbyterian Church is: A Heart for the Rancocas Valley.

Mission: First Presbyterian Church exists to honor God by making more disciples.

wonderful candidates with great resumes. 4 of them I know personally, and the 5th comes with a good recommendation from someone I know personally. All of them are already ordained in ECO and share a common belief in the Essential Tenets, so we have a good amount of certainty that they will be a good match for us theologically.

We have not closed the door to other possible candidates, but we are prayerfully considering those we have received, to see how the Lord will lead us. Once we get down to two or three, we will enlist some of the tools that ECO has provided to help us understand more about their spiritual gifts, leadership style and their personality so we can make sure we are getting a good match for the church.

Please cover the Pastor Nominating Team in prayer as we move forward in this very important process to find God's choice for your next pastor.

Work has continued on the Brainard Wing to turn it into a wonderful place to minister to our children. All the walls are up, the new doors are set, the new electric service is in, the air conditioning units are installed, and by the time you read this the painting will be in progress. After that new carpeting will be laid and new ceiling tiles installed before we begin doing the actual final setup for its use.

Because the work of the church continues, I want to encourage you to continue your financial support. You may send a check in the mail to the church office, give through your bank's bill pay system, download our church app from our website or give on the website (www.firstpresmtholly.org)

Your financial support is very important during this time. We certainly understand if you are not working or your hours have been cut. Your session has prayerfully decided that we will not lay off any of our staff during this time. Most will continue to work from home, but others are making trips into the building to take care of things that cannot be done at home – like the community lunch and maintenance. We are pursuing a forgivable loan through the Small Business Administration that is part of our president's stimulus package and our financial people have been diligently working to understand the rules, the process, and get the paperwork together to apply.

Hang on folks! The ride is bumpy, but the Lord will bring us through having strengthened us through the struggle! Much love to you all!

American Red Cross Blood Drive

Where: First Presbyterian Church

When: Saturday, June 13, 2020

Time: 8 am - 1 pm

Appointments are preferred.

For an appointment please contact: Mary Craig at **609.267.8621**

GIVE BLOOD



SAVE LIFE

Mission and Ministry Updates May 2020

The Mission Team is adding a new article to the newsletter to aid the congregation in becoming more aware of and reminded of the vast population that is separated from any effective witness to Jesus as Savior and Lord.

Each month you will find current news and prayer requests from several missions and ministries supported by FPC. Our hope is that you will support these groups through your personal prayer and resources and consider reaching out to them with words of encouragement.

Christian Caring Center – During the Covid-19 pandemic, the CCC is open on Wednesdays and Fridays from 10:00 – 2:00 for drive through pick up of pantry boxes, community lunch, and woods/motel outreach. They are continuing their services to help with referrals for housing, counseling, financial aid and sharing Jesus through their acts and words of love and truth of the Gospel.

What can you do to help? Pray for us & our community, make a monetary donation through our website (see below), drop off donations of personal hygiene items, non-perishables like individual cheese & crackers, cup of noodles, granola bars, tuna, etc. to fit in a zip lock bag. For our pantry boxes we could use non-perishable items, jelly (we have peanut butter), soups, chili, beef-aroni, mac & cheese, cereal, oatmeal, breakfast bars, tuna, spaghetti sauce & pasta items. We do have freezers & refrigerators for perishable items. If you have children, they could color pictures, write notes of encouragement, write down their favorite Bible verses, go out and find rocks and paint them, or other small crafts to put in the pantry boxes.

The CCC is located at 378 Lakehurst Rd, Browns Mills, NJ. Website is www.christiancaringcenter.net Personal cell phone contacts: Madelyn or Inell Sutton: 609-560-0743

InterVarsity Christian Fellowship – Chris and Christine Loesser are a dynamic couple who minister to students at Rider University, Rutgers Camden and RCBC and collaborate with other IV leaders from across the state of New Jersey. Through special campus events, prayer, small groups, and one-on-one relationship building, they share the love and truth of the Gospel with students and faculty. Pray for them as they go into full time online ministry, developing and sharing resources, funding online ministries, and continuing to plan for the return of students and exciting campus events in the future.

For more information and to encourage and pray for the Loessers, go to their facebook page: Life(!) in the Garden State: InterVarsity Ministry Updates

The Outreach Foundation – Hope for Syrian Students - In 2016, with more than 1.2 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon—60% of them school age and mostly Muslim—the National Evangelical [Presbyterian] Synod of Syria and Lebanon (NESSL) came up with a vision: open a school for some of these refugee children and offer them the Syrian curriculum so that they could both build upon their previous education and be prepared to return to their “normal schools” once the war was over. In October, enrollment in the four main schools included: **Tripoli** 105 students; **Minyara** 65 students; **Kab Elias** 120 students; **Tyre** 75 students.

In Kab Elias, Mrs. Ramak Abboud (whose husband, Tony, pastors the nearby Presbyterian Church in Khirbet Kanafer) oversees this transformational ministry with love, compassion and a quiet but resolute commitment to give witness to the Good News as she and her teachers, most of whom are members of the Presbyterian Church, serve the children whose families are not yet able to return to Syria, despite the (close to) ending of the fighting there.

Currently all the schools are closed because of the global pandemic. Pray that the virus would not enter the ref-

(Continued on page 5)

ugee camps. Pray also for food and basic necessity provision for the refugees (compare our situation in New Jersey to theirs). Pray that the fighting would end in Syria and these students and their families would be able to return to their homes and rebuild their lives in the country they love.

For more information and how to help, visit www.theoutreachfoundation.org and search for Hope for Syrian Students.

Next Generation Ministries

Hi all!

I hope that everyone is staying safe and healthy while at home. I know that this pandemic has turned just about every aspect of life upside down. It has changed the way we work, go to school, and even grocery shop. This pandemic has changed the way that the church does ministry completely. We now have a strong online presence and it is encouraging to see the feedback and comments that we are receiving.

The youth and I have been meeting for game nights, devotions and check ins. We are able to connect multiple times a week through zoom, the online video conference platform. We have played games like Trivia, Scavenger hunts and a gameshow like Survivor. Being able to connect face to face through zoom allows us to still play games and laugh together. They say laughter is the best medicine, and for us it is certainly helping.

While I definitely miss coming to church, meeting with the youth and children in person, dancing in Children's worship and playing dodgeball on Sunday nights, meeting on Zoom with them is a good alternative for now.

Stay safe, stay healthy, and Have a Laugh.

-Haley

Reminder: Church closed

The church office and building are closed until further notice. Worship Services can be seen on our website <http://firstpresmtholly.org> or on our Facebook page on Sundays at 9:30am.

Online opportunities:

Wednesday evening Zoom devotions at 7:00

Monday and Friday Zoom Prayer Gatherings at 1:00

MAY 2020

SUN MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT

1
12:00 Community
Luncheon

2

3
9:30 Worship Service

4
12:00 Community
Luncheon
1:00 Prayer for church
via Zoom

5

6
7:00 Weekly Devotions
via Zoom

7

8
12:00 Community
Luncheon
1:00 Prayer for church
via Zoom

9

10
9:30 Worship Service

11
12:00 Community
Luncheon
1:00 Prayer for church
via Zoom

12

13
7:00 Weekly Devotions
via Zoom

14

15
12:00 Community
Luncheon
1:00 Prayer for church
via Zoom

16

17
9:30 Worship Service

18
12:00 Community
Luncheon
1:00 Prayer for church
via Zoom

19

20
7:00 Weekly Devotions
via Zoom

21

22
12:00 Community
Luncheon
1:00 Prayer for church
via Zoom

23

24
9:30 Worship Service

25
12:00 Community
Luncheon
1:00 Prayer for church
via Zoom

26

27
7:00 Weekly Devotions
via Zoom

28

29
12:00 Community
Luncheon
1:00 Prayer for church
via Zoom

30

31
9:30 Worship Service