

THE TIDINGS

Shelter Island  Presbyterian Church

April 2020 Newsletter

From the Pastor's Study

Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

As I write this letter to you the specter of the Coronavirus has dominated both the news and our consciousness. There is no escaping a sense of foreboding that has enveloped even our 'sheltered' island. In response the Town has declared a State of Emergency, encouraged all to avoid public gatherings and practice what is now called 'social distancing.' The Session has voted to suspend Sunday worship until April 30, not as an act of fear or anxiety but out of love and concern for the vulnerable amongst us. There is a real sense of uncertainty about what might happen next fueled in large part by a lack of reliable information.

At the same time however, my daffodils, crocuses and tulips are ready to burst forth in all their glory, announcing a season of new and more abundant life.

We live now between these two realities. The truth is, we always have. King David gives voice to this, phrasing it this way; *'though I walk now through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. For thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.'*

King David first acknowledges the reality in which he lives. There are forces out of his control which seem hell bent on his and our destruction. But at the same time, he acknowledges the greater reality of the one who speaks a word of life, who is life, and who is now with us, for us, and who holds open a place for us in his house, were we will live, forever. Our fear is both real and justified. But praise God, so is our hope. The same hope David had. A hope based on the remembrance of what God has done and promises to do in the future and his abiding presence with us in the present.

It is that hope which informs our fear and anxiety. When all hell seems to be breaking loose, when things seem out of our control, that hope allows us to move forward in confidence and certainty that no matter what, He has our backs.

The Apostle Paul said it best I think, addressing a church in real fear for their future. *'For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'*
Romans 8:38-39

Amen and
Amen,
Pastor Bob

**PS-Please watch our Sunday Services on
our website at www.sipchurch.org.**



CONTACT INFORMATION

Physical Address:
32 North Ferry Road
Shelter Island, NY 11964

Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 612
Shelter Island, NY 11964

Church Office: 631-749-0805

Church Email:
Info.sipchurch@gmail.com

www.sipchurch.org

Pastor Bob's Cell Phone:
631-921-9417

Pastor Bob's Email:
rgriffin18@optonline.net



The Critical Importance of Church Choirs

October 10, 2017 by Vince Wilcox

Is the verdict final? Are church choirs going the way of pay phones and Blockbuster video stores? The evidence seems pretty convincing... From 1998 to 2012, 21% of evangelical churches and 40% of mainline churches stopped using choirs regularly in worship (according to the most recent National Congregational Study). That said, of the 200,000 evangelical and mainline Protestant churches in North America, 35% of evangelical congregations and 37% of mainline churches continue to use choirs—a total of approximately 70,000 churches. That's still a lot of folks who believe in the critical importance of church choir in their worship services. As an attorney, I'm trained to prepare arguments and present evidence. Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, here are seven reasons a choir can be vital to your church.

1. Choirs are biblical.

It's easy to miss, but the Book of Psalms is filled with detailed notes to the music director explaining the style, the melody, and the occasion of a particular song. Old Testament worship was led by great numbers of trained singers and musicians. And the Psalms were the hymnal of the New Testament church. This is not to say that choirs are the only valid scriptural model for worship, but to dismiss choirs altogether as archaic and irrelevant means we risk forsaking a rich biblical tradition.

2. Choirs encourage excellence in worship.

A choir rarely performs "off the cuff." Rather, the director spends time and resources finding the perfect arrangement of the perfect song. Then, the director spends time rehearsing singers and musicians to perform the song with beauty and precision. Choir members learn the parts and hopefully transcend the notes on the page—allowing the song to speak to and through them to the congregation. Ideally, a "performance" piece inspires people to praise. Likewise, using the choir for congregational songs is a powerful prompt to worship: people clearly hear the melody and join their voices as one. A practiced choir encourages a sense of awe and reverence through their excellence and preparation.

3. Choirs celebrate the human voice.

There is something extraordinary about hearing a group of practiced singers use their God-given instruments to worship their Creator. I remember the first time I ever heard a gospel mass choir. The summer before I went to college, I attended a community talent show at Woodrow Wilson High School in Portsmouth, Virginia. There were folk singers and rock bands and soloists. Then the choir took the stage. About ten seconds after they started singing, every hair on my head stood up. I had goose bumps on my goose bumps. The sheer intensity and emotion of those voices eclipsed any of the prior performances. We were on our feet, singing along—transformed from spectators into participants. Their rich, passionate voices touched something deep within us. And in doing so, they connected our hearts to our Father's.

4. Choirs can inspire and lead worship.

One of the arguments against using choirs in contemporary worship services is that it relegates congregants to the role of bystanders. As if we're saying, "Let the professionals do the worshiping—you just sit here and enjoy it." Instead—the argument continues—we ought to make congregational singing as simple and inviting as possible. So we do away with hymnals that have written harmony parts and simply project lyrics on the screen to be sung in unison. But this great "dumbing down" doesn't necessarily encourage more participation. You don't have to look far to find modern worship settings where people are "spectating" just as much as they might have done with a choir. The issue isn't as much *if* a choir should be used; rather, it's *how* a choir can be used to facilitate meaningful worship. Yes, it's possible to make your choir (or worship band, for that matter) the center of attention. But that's "worship malpractice" inasmuch as it misdirects your congregation away from the true object of worship, the Lord. But properly used, a choir (or worship band) can lead your congregation to worship in Spirit and in truth.

5. Choirs can be redemptive communities.

We live in the age of the superstar worship leader and celebrity pastor. Choirs can be an antidote to this spiritual epidemic. A healthy choir affirms *all its members*—not just the high-profile ones. A choir can be a redemptive community where all the imperfect parts of the Body of Christ are cherished—especially when someone is going through a tough time. A choir is a place where you belong, where you are missed when you're not there, and where you can contribute your modest talent so that the whole can be greater than the sum of its parts. Effective directors treat their choirs as "a ministry within a ministry." They take time to share devotional thoughts, prayer requests, and pot-luck dinners. Like the fabled bar in the TV show *Cheers*, their choir is a place "where everyone knows your name." This is especially important in larger churches, where it's easy to remain anonymous, or worse, overlooked.

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6. Choirs make us work together.

Similarly, the American archetype is that of uncompromised individualism. We resist being woven into the fabric of a community—especially one where we must constantly subjugate ourselves to a leader and submit our talents to one another. Choirs can help cure the disease of self-centeredness. To succeed, we *must* yield ourselves to one another. We must listen to each other. We must follow the leader’s direction. Looking away for even a moment can be embarrassing. Straying from the notes can be disastrous. Choirs teach us mutuality and submission within the context of an endeavor greater than ourselves.

7. Choirs can encourage musical diversity.

Most “choir folks” are more musically diverse than you’d think. They appreciate lots of different styles of music because—somewhere along the way—they had a choir director who made them sing a hymn in German or an early American folk-song or an *a cappella* arrangement of a pop song from the radio. Yes, choir nerds can be a little snooty, but I’ll bet they’re fans of music from several centuries and not just a certain decade.

And in closing...

And so, ladies and gentlemen of the jury, I close by appealing to the witness of Scripture, to the majestic power of disciplined voices in song, to the spiritual benefit of being part of a redemptive community, and to the richness that comes from diversity in worship. I ask that you render a verdict in favor of the importance of church choir program in your local church. Support your choir director—or recruit one if you don’t have one. Set aside funds to build a library of great music. Celebrate your choir every time they sing. I rest my case.

SESSION & MONEY MATTERS BY LAURA NELSEN

Have you ever wondered about church finances after the budget is presented and approved at the annual meeting? As bills arrive our efficient secretary, Katherine, puts them in a folder. Peter Vielbig, our vigilant (but charming) SIPC Treasurer, reviews the bills and if all is in order pays the bill. If a question arises about an invoice, he will contact the vender for a discussion. Once a month he generates a report for Session that tells us where we stand regarding our projected budget and gives them a general financial review. At the monthly Session meeting each member receives a copy of the report for their perusal. Sometimes a Session Member has a clarification question for Peter or a suggestion. The Treasurer’s report is then voted on as to whether it is accepted as presented. As you can see our church finances are scrutinized on a regular basis.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS BY KATHERINE MOORE

As we all know the schedule of events occurring at the church building are all suspended as of this time. We are all called to do our part to slow the progress of the virus by staying home, staying away from one another and washing our hands ALL THE TIME. Please continue to be in prayer and in phone, text, email, Facebook, twitter, Instagram, etc, contact with all whom you love and whoever God places on your heart. We need each other more than ever in this time of self-quarantine. So even though we do not know when our together events will resume, we do know that our connections remain and God is in control. Keep up with the church Facebook and Web page for updates.

BUILDING & GROUNDS REPORT BY DAN BINDER

The Manse has been vacated by a previous renter and has undergone some cleaning, repainting and repairing. The entrance door to the kitchen has been replaced.

At the Church we are finally using our new locks to secure the building when it is not in use. Estimates to replace the sanctuary windows are still in the works.

Otherwise, things are pretty quiet for building and grounds at the moment.



DEACONS’ REPORT BY BRENDA BERGMAN

The Deacons have been making phone calls of reassurance and help to the elderly homebound during this time of self-isolation. Easter flowers have been ordered and will be delivered, without personal visits, during Passion Week.

FISH BOXES FOR ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING

Before we suspended our services at the beginning of Lent, many of you picked up a Fish Box to collect change for One Great Hour of Sharing. With less time out and about this season, you may have put the boxes to the side or not had any change to put in the boxes. One Great Hour of Sharing is even more in need of our support at this time. Please consider as you prayerfully complete our Lent season and enter into the celebration of Easter that not only do our local families and friends need our support, but the world needs us and needs the services supported by One Great Hour of Sharing. Please send the church a separate check marked *One Great Hour* or *Fish Box* so they can be processed separately and the gifts you give will get in the proper hands. Thank you

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Many thanks to Dan Binder and Joy Bausman who are in the fundraising planning stage for the six large Sanctuary windows.

FROM THE TREASURER BY PETER VIELBIG

As you can well imagine, this is a doubly scary time for a church treasurer. I pray that my loved ones and I stay healthy and that our church will have the funds to keep up with our expenses. Unfortunately, we can't self-isolate our treasury from those who provide us with goods and services. Fortunately, we have a very generous congregation, who, for the near future, can't use the Sunday offering plate, but have been making their offering by putting their check in the mail. Thank you to all those who are doing so, and I encourage all of us to keep up with their pledge commitment.

As it is with your household, we still must meet payroll, pay for oil heat, insurance, maintenance, etc., which is not so different in dollars as when are fully operational. Although some of our funds were placed in long term investments in the markets, most of our reserves are in protected funds so we don't have to worry about the current losses in the markets effecting their value. We may have to draw on some of those funds now, to help see us through this crisis.

And for good news, we recently received two extremely generous donations towards replacing the windows in the sanctuary. We will not proceed with that work until we have all the money for it but thanks to these two very generous donors, we are well on our way to getting this big project funded.

Because the disruption, we will send out pledge statement at the end of April so everyone can see where they stand with their pledges. If you have any questions, please feel free to call me on my cell (yes, most likely, you will catch me at home), at (609) 306-1114. Thank you for your continued stewardship. Stay healthy, stay home and keep in touch with your neighbors and loved ones.

EVENTS PLANNING BY LAURA NELSEN

Asparagus, ice cream and shrimp al chipotle--OH MY!
Chips, salsa, and blueberry crumble!
Flan, cauliflower, soup and chicken!
There were chefs, helpers, candles and candy, salad, and fettuccine--OH MY!
We added in tablecloths and flowers and named it--AN EVENT
"CELEBRITY CHEF DINNERS - OH MY - OH MY - OH MY!"

The folks came, dined and had a good time! Thanks for all the support from everyone. These evenings continue to support our Church's missions. We are sorry to announce that the March 31st Celebrity Chef dinner, in addition to the annual concert by the Juniata Choir have been cancelled due to the current situation with the COVID-19 virus. Stay calm, wash your hands, and stay well!

UPDATE FROM THE PASTORAL NOMINATING COMMITTEE: THE THREE P'S BY HEATHER REYLEK

Patience:

It's an exciting time as we prepare for our Pastoral Search. We realize it's like telling children that Christmas is just around the corner and it seems like it takes forever and ever. So, **patience** as we **prepare**, and **prayer** for our congregation as we move through this process. We first started this journey on January 5th when we met with the congregation to talk about the possibility of joining with sister church First Presbyterian Church of Southold in our search for our new pastor. We listened to your questions and concerns and discussed what this opportunity could do for us. The response was very positive so we are meeting with Southold regularly to work out the details. Bottom line as of early March is that we have not begun looking at candidates yet. But, we're getting there.

Preparation:

The Joint Search Committee 2020 has been formed and is made up of myself (SIP) and Greg Doroski (FPC) as Co-Chairs, Ann Romeo (FPC) Secretary, Marianne Baird (SIP), Jay Batterman (FPC), Liz Burns (FPC), Ellen Gove (SIP), and Peter Kelley (FPC), Ex Officio. We've developed a very pleasant, respectful working relationship and we are moving forward. There's been a lot to do, no different than when we had our last search. A big plus is that we've completed our Joint Search Narrative Questions. We have also identified the ten characteristics of leadership Competencies. We've also discussed budget considerations. Much of this work is under the guidance of our COM. It is a bit complicated and new to put together our search based on two independent churches and their guidance is important.

Prayer:

In closing, let us joyfully pray for continued guidance from COM, our Pastoral Nominating Committee, but most importantly from a much higher authority. May our Lord God watch over us and lead us to a very wonderful selection of our new pastor.

MISSION REPORT BY MARILYNN PYSHER

The Mission Team has been meeting regularly, discussing a variety of projects. Our theme for this year is Building Bridges – within our church, our island community, and beyond our borders. Our Better World Book Club is going strong and attracting new members all the time. Come join us for stimulating and profound discussions of non-fiction books dealing with socially important subjects. We are committed to hosting another annual workshop shifting to a Fall event. We will gather a panel to discuss the Island resources that will soon be laid out in a publication put together by interdisciplinary leaders of the community. Also in the planning stages is having a group from the Triune Baptist Church come sing some foot stomping, hand clapping Gospel music. We are working toward determining a date for a potluck social with New Jerusalem Church who are using our Fellowship Hall weekly for services. Other projects under discussion and/or in the works are an Easter Egg-dyeing session for Island children (stay tuned for details!), a summer pig roast, and dance classes for youth of all ages. Some adults might want a refresher too! Meanwhile, our regular work with Maureen's Haven continues in full swing, as do our loans for KIVA projects. As you can see, we are doing many exciting things to meet needs, expand minds and hearts, and revitalize our church, but are just a small group and need your help. We'd be very grateful if you would offer your ideas and assistance on any small or big project.

MISSION STATEMENT

We envision the Shelter Island Presbyterian Church as a spiritual heart of our small island community—a congregation that keeps its doors open to all and offers service and support to friends, neighbors, and visitors from beyond our shores.

We will encourage the spiritual growth of our Church's people in Jesus Christ through worship, service to others, stewardship, study, and fellowship with one another. We will work to increase our spiritual engagement with youth, young families, and our growing senior population.

Inspired by God's Word, we look forward to our future with faith and confidence in God's purpose for us.

AS WE BELIEVE, SO WE DO.

IMPORTANT!

Session has decided to extend the suspension of all Shelter Island Presbyterian Church Worship Services through Thursday, April 30, 2020, at which time, Session will revisit. **Services can be viewed on the Church's website at: www.sipchurch.org.** The Church building will be closed except for Town Nutrition Program use and the Food Pantry.

Shelter Island
Presbyterian Church
P.O. Box 612
Shelter Island, NY 11964

631-749-0805

www.sipchurch.org

Info.sipchurch@gmail.com



PLEASE
PLACE
STAMP
HERE