

The Newsletter of the Santa Barbara Presbytery

April 2020

We, the PC (USA) churches and ministries of Ventura, Santa Barbara, and San Luis Obispo counties, join together to foster vibrant worshipping communities who proclaim and live out the love of Jesus Christ for one another and our neighbors.

Joining Together. Worshipping God. Loving People.

Covid-19 Update

With the statewide lockdown in place our congregations are not meeting on church campus'. Many have arranged various virtual means for delivery of the word.

The following article appeared in Presbyterian Mission

Now playing: 'Worshipping God from a bucket seat'

by Scott O'Neill | Presbyterian News Service

LOUISVILLE — Many of a certain age can harken back fondly to loading into the family station wagon and visiting the local drive-in movie theater. Finding just the right spot to get a great view of the screen, attaching the scratchy metal speaker to the partially rolled-down window, and sitting in the back seat with blankets, pillows, a big tub of popcorn, and a drink were integral parts of the outdoor movie experience.

During this COVID-19 pandemic, congregations are forced to get creative in order to hold worship services. Re-creating the drive-in movie experience is one solution that helps create and maintain community while still following social-distancing protocols.

First Presbyterian Church in Oxnard, California, is one such congregation.

"Our baby boomers and older members are among those who love drive-in church; they grew up going to drive-in movies and therefore get the concept," said Rev. Ted Brandt, First Presbyterian's pastor. "Some of the older folks have no idea how to livestream or join Zoom.



The Rev. Ted Brandt, pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Oxnard, California, is pictured during the March 29 version of drive-in church. (Contributed photo)

So, if we did not do drive-in church, we would not be able to have community time with them."

Brandt got the idea from a Rhode Island pastor who mentioned the idea on Facebook, and it felt like the right response for his congregation to the current health crisis. The first drive-in service was held in late March, with a little over half of the attendees being regular members. Others showed up as a result of social media outreach and word-of-mouth.

To foster community among drivers, Brandt has a greeter write down the names of attendees that he knows and reads the names during the service. Brandt also streams the Facebook Live feed on his smartphone located in the pulpit so he can see who's watching and monitor comments.

"I make a point of reading Facebook viewers' names and their comments aloud so that the live-streamers feel included and the people worshiping in the parking lot know others are sharing in worship with them from home," said Brandt.



With all the technology in play that helps maximize community outreach, First Presbyterian still has parishioners who cannot join in. To fix that, volunteers record the service as it broadcasts over the FM car radio and drop off a cassette tape at the member's house, along with a large print version of the Sunday bulletin which contains the Scriptures and song lyrics. In addition, Brandt and his team outreach the community through weekly phone calls by deacons to families, socially distant pastoral visits, daily worship emails, and adult class and Maundy Thursday worship via Zoom.

Shadle Park Presbyterian Church in Spokane, Washington, is among other churches that have also started drive-in church last month. According to this Spokane Spokesman-Review article, the drive-in concept provides congregations a hint of normalcy during an intense period of isolation.

It's certainly a challenging time for churches. Brandt encourages congregations to use their imaginations as they decide how to offer worship.

"I would advise congregations as they think and pray and discern what's right for them to go for it full throttle and be open to new opportunities along the way. We keep finding more and more opportunities to be the Body of Christ to one another and to the larger community."

Despite the current challenges presented by COVID-19, Brandt and his team at First Presbyterian are embracing the opportunity and learning new skills along the way.

"I absolutely love re-inventing church on the fly in a short period of time with our unstoppable team," said Brandt. "We are discovering

unexpected opportunities to bless others and are blessed to be in a place where we can compassionately and imaginatively create new things with God. Times of crisis provide increasing opportunities to do just that. There are so many hearts open to God now. God puts us where we are for such a time as this."

View First Presbyterian Church's drive-in church videos on the church's YouTube channel [here](#).

Access the [Facebook Live](#) stream.

Visit the [PC\(USA\) Covid-19 resource page](#) for more information about coping during the pandemic, including guidance for live-streaming and online worship resources.

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This is Your Newsletter

Have an item for the newsletter? Tell us your story. What's your Bright Spot? Send it to the editor, Lee Kirkpatrick at lkksbca@gmail.com. Word format preferred and photos always welcomed.



Next Presbytery Meeting

Currently scheduled for:

SATURDAY, MAY 16, 2020, 9:30AM. First Presbyterian Church Oxnard, with The Way Station.

Stay tuned for changes during this season of pandemic. Stay safe, stay well.