

The Mustard Seed

June 2020



Trinity Presbyterian Church USA

2061 Glenns Bay Road, Surfside Beach, SC 29575 843-650-0313 (Office)
P. O. Box 14758, Surfside Beach, SC 29587 843-353-1883 (Fax)
TrinityPresbyChurch.com ChurchOffice@TrinityPresbyChurch.com

June 1, 2020

Dear Trinity Family and Friends,

We were already living in difficult times. We were already stressed, strained, anxious, angry, and uncertain. Then last week the polite bandage that covers over the wound of racism in our nation has ripped off anew. I am not yet prepared to speak in any detail about what is happening now or what has brought us to this moment. I think we need to listen to African Americans and other people of color when they use their voices to interpret these events for the rest of us. I think we need to help amplify those non-white voices that try to point a way forward.

Therefore, this month, I am turning over the space usually occupied by my voice in the Mustard Seed, to the Rev. Dr. Brian Blount, President of Union Presbyterian Seminary and professor of New Testament. This is the seminary which prepared me for ministry and awarded me a M.Div degree and where I am now pursuing my D.Min. Dr. Blount is an inspired preacher, visionary leader, insightful teacher, devoted pastor, and respected scholar, especially for his published work on the Gospel of Mark and the Book of Revelation. I trust Dr. Blount, I respect his voice and have been guided by his wisdom in the past. I ask you, with me, to listen to him today.

Peace,

--Pastor Tony

May 31, 2020

“And they conquered [evil] by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their witness.” The Apocalypse. 12:11.

If white Christians were to ask me, a black Christian, what they should do in response to the spiral of racially sparked violence into which we are rapidly and inevitably descending, I have pondered the response I would give. Strange, since no one has asked, that I nonetheless feel compelled to answer.



I feel compelled because I am afraid. I am afraid because I fear that my voice is too insignificant to matter. I am afraid because I fear that while what I say bears insufficient weight to make a difference, it carries just enough potency to get me in trouble. I am afraid because I fear bringing trouble on myself when my people are writhing in a perpetual abyss of systemic injustice. I am afraid because I fear that one day, long after I have died, my son and daughter will still weep at news about a black individual murdered while sitting in her home, running in his community, walking home from his corner store, driving in her car, standing in his front yard, exploring in his park, worshipping in her church, lying helpless on an American street, the full weight of a cavalier, almost casual, curiously disinterested, white anger crushing his throat beneath its self-righteous, imperious knee. I am afraid because I fear a reckoning on the streets if we cannot find justice in the courts, redress in our politics, realignment of our institutional policies, and reconsideration of our racial values. I am afraid because I fear that when I am called to my own final reckoning the record will show that I didn't do my part. I didn't witness. Not enough.

White Christians are not witnessing. Not enough.

In the Apocalypse, the world is possessed by systemic evil. That evil manifested itself in an imperial reign that demanded a fealty the Apocalypse's author claimed belonged solely to Christ. Rome wanted to be worshiped. Christ believers could respond in one

of two ways. They could patriotically idolize Rome or they could witness to the Lordship of Christ. Either. Or.

Rome promised to punish anyone who refused to render the reverence it believed it was due. Writing to seven churches located in the belly of this imperial, bestial declaration of religious and political supremacy, John of Patmos pleaded for a witness to an alternative truth. The only leader who deserved fidelity and worship was this Jesus who died on a Roman cross. It was not Rome's empire but his resurrected Reign that should be revered and realized. He spilled his blood in an effort to inaugurate that Reign. He did his part. Our Christian part is to witness to that Reign in the way we speak our words and live our lives. That is our formula for reckoning with systemic evil that possesses institutions and drives individuals mad. The Blood of the Lamb. The Witness of the Lamb's Followers. Us black and you white Christians.

What does a Reign under the Lordship of Christ look like? Before we can witness for it we must know what it is. If we could see into God's future the way John saw through his open door into transcendence, perhaps we would know. We are not that farsighted. But our hindsight ought to be 20/20. Because it is written in a record for us. If Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ of the Apocalypse, then we have a glimpse of what a Reign under his rule would look like? We have something for which to witness. In the Gospel vision. There, lepers are touched. There are no Eric Garners who cannot breathe. There, the sick are unilaterally healed. There are no Ahmaud Arberys demonically hunted to death. There, codes and laws too legalistically and unjustly applied are broken. There are no Breonna Taylors, shot eight times, when their homes are broken into by law enforcement. There, men once incapacitated by paralysis walk. There are no George Floyds paralyzed beneath the weight of ruthless state agents. There, systems of ethnic segregation are broken open by the vision of a house of prayer for all the nations. There is no aspiration of a rule where one people structure society so that it perpetually privileges them and those like them.

We know from hindsight the promise of Jesus' vision. We know what it intends. Our calling is to witness to it. No matter the cross.

I am afraid because I know I am not witnessing. Not enough.

I am afraid because I know that white Christians are not witnessing. Not enough.

Why does our country need white Christians to witness more than they are? More now even than black Christians and black people of every faith and of no faith?

Whether it's individual acts of brutality or systemic oppression, it is hard to maneuver successfully for change when your hands are shackled, your legs are taken out from beneath you, and someone is kneeling on your neck. You need the people who wield economic, political, police, and military power to reign in the agents they have authorized to act on their behalf, to rain down change upon the systems their forebears have spent centuries erecting. To privilege themselves.

You need them to witness.

Not just spiritually. Tangibly. Not just with well-intentioned prayer. With concrete action. Not just from the pulpit and in the sanctuary. Out in the world, on the streets of their cities, in the corridors of their power.

No, this evil of enduring American racism is not just a Christian problem. But for a people who claim to follow a Jesus who died on a cross for all people, and whom we claim reigns in heaven interceding with God for all people, it is an evil we must especially engage. We cannot claim to witness to this risen Christ and simultaneously allow our country's descent into this racial abyss.

We Christian people can make a difference. We must help defeat this draconian, systemic evil.

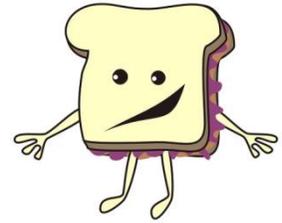
By our witness.

Before it is too late.

June Missions for Trinity Presbyterian Church



Sandwich making for Help for Kids will begin on June 4th and will continue until about August 23rd. This year Cindy Kidd is asking that volunteers make the bologna sandwiches at home and drop them off at the church on Thursday mornings. The Help for Kids van will pick up the sandwiches at 10 AM. Questions? Contact Cindy Kidd at 843-748-0536 or by email at CPKidd211@gmail.com



Special Offerings Envelope

June is set aside for the Pentecost Offering which is a PC(USA) church-wide effort to support young people. Forty percent of your offering goes to Help for Kids locally. The other sixty percent goes to the Presbytery which uses the funds to inspire young people to share their faith, ideas, and unique gifts with the church and the world.

Pentecost Offering

for Children at Risk, Youth, and Young Adults

Through the Pentecost Offering, the church expresses a common commitment to provide hope for children at risk, opportunities for youth and young adults to grow in their faith, and short-term mission service options for young adults.



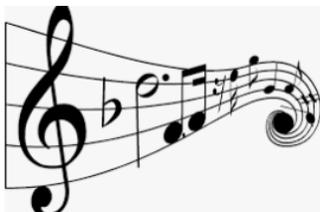
Please give generously.



Communion Offering

June is traditionally a month where members can make a special donation in the narthex on Communion Sunday. The money collected goes into the Good Samaritan Fund which is used by Pastor Tony to help those members and other individuals who have special and specific needs. In this time when people have lost jobs or have had hours cut, more are in need of this type of help. If Trinity has not reopened for communion, please consider sending a check or dropping off a contribution at the church.

MUSICIANS FUND OFFERING



Members of the congregation frequently comment on how music enriches services at Trinity, especially during holidays. However, there is a cost to bringing in the outside musicians. All funds collected for the Musicians Fund will go to defray the cost to hire these performers. Please give generously to ensure the trumpets continue to blow and the drums keep beating.

This June calendar might seem a little empty, but life inside Trinity will resume when the time is right. Diana is experimenting with the resumption of bell practice, AA meetings are taking place again, and Y2K has begun to open its doors.

June 2020						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Deacon of the Month Judi Bittner 336-259-8511						
Y2K Day Care and Summer Camp resume 	1	2	3	4 Help for Kids sandwich making Pick up at 10 AM	5 Bible Study	6
7	8	9 Bells resume at 5:30 PM	10	11 Help for Kids sandwich making Pick up at 10 AM	12 Bible Study	13
14	15	16	17	18 Help for Kids sandwich making Pick up at 10 AM	19 <i>Bible Study</i>	20
21	22	23	24	25 Help for Kids sandwich making Pick up at 10 AM	26 Bible Study	27
28	29	30	July 1	July 2 Help for Kids sandwich making Pick up at 10 AM	July 3	July 4



Jay Olson	06/02
Larry Davis	06/03
Mike Madden	06/03
Ryan Beale	06/04
Barbara Bonnett	06/05
Art Junga	06/06
JoAnn Kuhn	06/07
Barbara Jones	06/08
Clare Droba	06/09
Susan Christian	06/09
Henry Johnson	06/10
Dave Russell	06/11
Rob Crucey	06/15
Ron Sherrill	06/20
Ruth McConnell	06/21
Benny Johnson	06/22
Kathy Coppell	06/24
Jim Molnar	06/25
John Beale	06/27
Heather Larson	06/27
Jill Glasser	06/29
Kevin Christian	06/30



Joyce and Marshall Parker	06/04
Sandy and Ray Spitz	06/06
Heather and Tony Larson	06/07
Cynthia & Mike Romano	06/10
Judi and Stan Bittner	06/12
Evelyn & Ron Brodrick	06/12
Susan and Kevin Christian	06/14
Jo Mary & Brown Phillips	06/18
Terrie and Mark Allen	06/23
Cynthia and Randy Kidd	06/23
Ann and Joel Long	06/27



Patsy Jennings is deeply appreciative to everyone who called, sent cards and prayed for her during the past months. Her treatments are over and she can't wait to get back to normal. Thanks!

Many thanks for the phone calls, texts, and cards!! I am feeling better each day. I feel that my church family is close by, even though we are practicing social distancing. Hopefully, everything will get back to "normal" soon.

Stay healthy and God Bless,

Phyllis





While we were all worshipping from home during this Covid-19 pandemic, the Building and Grounds Committee has been extremely busy painting the church interior. Did you know the ceiling in the Narthex and chancel is about 30 feet high? A few brave men assembled, and climbed scaffolding to paint and get a bird's eye view of the church interior.

We would like to thank everyone who donated painting supplies as well as those who gave monetary gifts to defray the painting costs.

The dedicated volunteers who gave up their valuable time to make this task happen were Ben Hartman, Ed Oskandy, Matt McConnell, Al Sweigert, Bill

Forman, Ron Mildenstein, Harry and Debbie Walker, Ray Spitz, Brian Flint, Judy Oskandy, Joel Long, and Randy Kidd. These volunteers not only painted but disassembled the church, erected and moved scaffolding several times, removed and cleaned vents, recessed lights, moved piano, and organ, and reassembled everything when finally done.

We can't wait for you all to come and see it.





Not only did the sanctuary and narthex get spruced up, but Sandy Eaton with the help of her husband, her staff, and all the others, such as Ed Oskandy, she could grab, cleaned, washed, waxed and painted many areas of the building. You can see your reflection in the gym floor as well as in the floor of the kitchen and fellowship hall which all glisten with fresh wax.



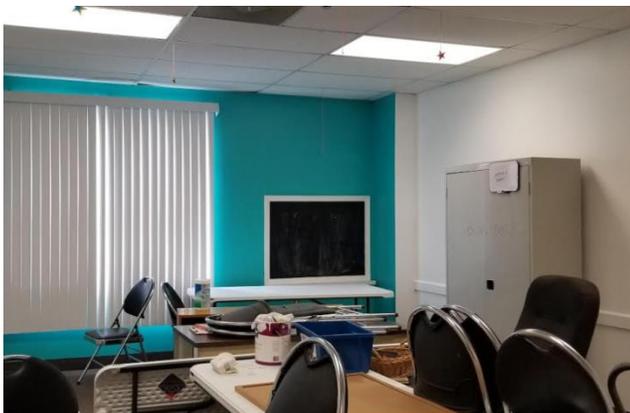
The bathrooms by the gym have also been scrubbed, waxed, and painted. Chair rails have been installed in classrooms.



The Y2K programs will resume on June 1st following the new guidelines. Temperatures will be taken each day and the exchange of children will occur outside the building, not in.

Masks will be worn when appropriate and necessary. Sandy is making cloth masks for the older children.

Y2K has been given a gift of masks and hand sanitizer and has received a DSS grant which is designed to assist providers in paying for their child care facility expenses, including rent/mortgage payments, utility bills, cleaning or sanitation costs, and personnel costs.



Session News from March and April meetings.

- Trinity received the New Harmony Presbytery Technology Grant. This new equipment will allow us to Live Stream simultaneously to Facebook Live and YouTube, while also making a HD quality recording that we can upload to the website that will have a far more professional look and sound. This equipment is compatible with equipment that we already own.
- The Session approved the opening of the Community Center on May 18th with guidelines similar to restaurants with inside dining. The leader of each group will be required to sign a form acknowledging these guidelines.
- The Session amended and approved the Worship Committee's recommendations regarding changes to worship post-COVID-19.
- The next Session meeting will be via ZOOM on May 28th at 1:00PM. It was changed because the Guiding Council of the New Harmony Presbytery meets on the 27th and will offer guidance on in person worship and meetings.

AN UPDATE REGARDING TRINITY AND COVID-19:

Dear Trinity Family and Friends,

June 1, 2020

Grace and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. We write to tell you of the Sessions decision not to resume gathering for in-person worship or other church activities in June.

As a worship leader I am accustomed to fulfilling my sacred calling by seeking to gather as many as possible for worship in Spirit and Truth, through prayer, preaching, and song. As a pastor, I am accustomed to fulfilling my sacred duty by gathering as many as will come for fellowship and to engage in mission, by calling upon those in nursing homes and hospitals. The Elders and I have come to realize, however, that promoting and facilitating physical proximity, especially through songful worship, poses a potentially lethal threat to the health and safety of our families, friends, and neighbors.

Our responsibility to promote physical distancing during this pandemic is a sacred duty, our faith calls us to be devoted to the preservation of lives, and of health and wellness. Our obligation to promote public health during this pandemic is part and parcel of our core beliefs, inextricable with our sense of what God demands of us. For this reason, we believe we ought not to gather together during this time, lest our congregation becomes an incubator for COVID-19.

Over the these last weeks our church family has discovered new ways of keeping in touch, gathering for worship online, and continuing in our faithful commitment to love God and our neighbors through mission and ministry. The Session can clearly say, by God's grace, that while our members may not be gathering in this building, our church continues to thrive and flourish. We are, by every definition of the word, essential.

Friends, we are, all of us, weary of social distancing requirements. We all long to gather, to sing songs of praise and lament, and to open ourselves to the sacred stories of faith. We miss our rites and traditions. As your Pastor and Elders please know that our hearts ache for the day we can resume in-person worship, fellowship, and community. But that time is not now. The love that caused us to suspend our gatherings – even though we never had to – is the same love which calls us to keep the doors of our sanctuaries closed, despite any permission or encouragement we might have from elected officials. The medical advice we have received is clear; it is not yet safe for us to meet. We also know this in our hearts. At this moment – and likely for some time to come – human behavior in group settings is our greatest asset or liability.

The virus has claimed the lives of over 100,000 Americans and wreaked havoc in almost every area of our lives. Many have lost their jobs. Life amidst COVID-19 feels like a succession of losses. We are committed to serving our neighbors through prayer, but also through mission. This is why, even as we deny ourselves the joy of gathering for worship, we have permitted the resumption of our mission outreach to the recovery community and to children and families through Trinity Y2K.

When the time is right, we will gather again in this holy place. We will celebrate again. We will lift up our hearts in prayer and song again. But that time is not now. The Session is scheduled to meet again on June 22 and will evaluate again whether the time has arrived to resume in-person worship and gatherings and what new procedures and precautions will need to be in place. Our decision then, as now, will be based upon the course of this disease in our area and what love of God and neighbor require.

In the meantime, your church staff and Elders are working hard to bless the ties that binds us together and to adapt our ministry and mission to these times. Groups in the church that wish to gather online using the ZOOM platform are welcome to do so, call the church office and we will provide help and support to facilitate online gatherings. We are also evaluating ways that we might gather outdoors in physically distanced ways to engage in fellowship and prayer. We also give thanks for the faithfulness of your financial stewardship and ask for your continued faithful giving.

Finally, we share our discernment of how we are called to respond to these times with humility, with a listening heart, and with full appreciation for the complexity and uncertainty that challenges all of us in this moment. We ask your prayers and we pray for you. God bless you all.

Yours in faith,



Rev. Anthony L. Larson, Pastor
Trinity Presbyterian Church of Surfside Beach



Phyllis B. Wicker, Clerk of Session
Trinity Presbyterian Church of Surfside Beach