

## JAMESTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

411 Liberty Street, Jamestown, PA 16134

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June 11, 2020

Dear JPC family and friends,

**“When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place”** (Acts 2:1). Thus begins the account of the promised Holy Spirit coming to dwell in Christ’s people, the Church. Since mid-March our congregation – like churches throughout the country -- has been unable to gather in one place, but we have worshiped together using online and written materials. It has been such an encouragement to me, to join with you each Sunday morning via the online service (admittedly, with cup of coffee in hand and often a cat on my lap).

And now – as you know from last week’s letter -- **we will resume “in sanctuary” worship starting next Sunday, June 21<sup>st</sup>, at 10:00 (summer hours). Thanks be to God!**

The COVID-19 virus has not disappeared, and as yet, there is no vaccine. While the majority of people who catch the illness recover on their own with no medical treatment, the virus can lead to hospitalization for those who are elderly or have other medical conditions. As Christians, we are called to trust in the Lord and to be mindful of the welfare of others. So as we re-open for worship services, Session has decided upon the following precautions:

- Everyone is asked to wear masks while in the building. Disposable masks will be provided for those who have forgotten them.
- Please enter through the white door or elevator, using hand sanitizer as you come in.
- About half the usual seating in the sanctuary and annex will be available. Family groups (those who are in close physical proximity throughout the week) can sit together but otherwise, please maintain an appropriate distance while choosing where to sit
- Instead of a printed bulletin, worship aids will be projected on the overhead screen
- Since we will be wearing masks, we will hum, sing quietly or simply listen to hymns
- Tithes and offerings will be placed in offering plates on a table as we depart

As we gather once again for worship in the sanctuary, there may be some awkward moments. There may be feelings of sadness or frustration when some things are not done in the same way we know and love. Traditions are important, and we do not make changes lightly. I thank you in advance for your patience, understanding and good humor as together we make adjustments out of concern for the health of others.

However, the core of our worship has not, and will not, change. We gather to praise and glorify our Lord and King. We gather to hear God’s word, to pray for one another and the world, and to be mutually encouraged in the faith.

(continued on reverse)

We know there will be some who, for various reasons, are unable to come to the church for worship on Sunday mornings. Certainly, if you are not feeling well or have reason to believe you have been in contact with a person who has the virus, *please* stay home.

Portions of the worship service will be recorded and a shortened version posted for online viewing (we do not have the ability to post an hour-long service or live-stream a simultaneous service). And, weekly worship materials will be available including the sermon.

Here are a few other updates:

- The church secretary, Linda Pinney, will be on vacation June 11-19, returning Monday June 22. The church phone and EMail will be checked frequently during this time.
- This month's free Saturday supper is on June 13<sup>th</sup> – a week earlier than usual – featuring pulled pork sandwiches by take out with advanced reservations through the church office (724-932-2101).
- Summer activities are being planned for the Youth Group, beginning with an outing Sunday afternoon June 28. A letter went out last week to Youth Group families. If you are interested but did not receive a letter, contact Tom Walker at (724) 815-8767 or Janeen Mihoci (724) 456-9368.
- Although we are resuming worship in the sanctuary, Sunday School for all ages is "on hold" for the time being. In addition, the library and children's play area (nursery) on the sanctuary level are temporarily closed.

Once again, I thank you for your patience, your understanding and good will throughout the last months. It has been a perplexing and troubling time, and we are not through yet. But in many ways it has also been a time of unexpected blessing, as God continues to work in and through life's circumstances to bring about his purposes in our lives and in the world.

May the Lord bless you with grace and peace in abundance, as together we watch in joyful hope for the good future he has in store for all his people.

[Pastor Sue]

*PS: If you no longer wish to receive these update letters, please let the church office know*

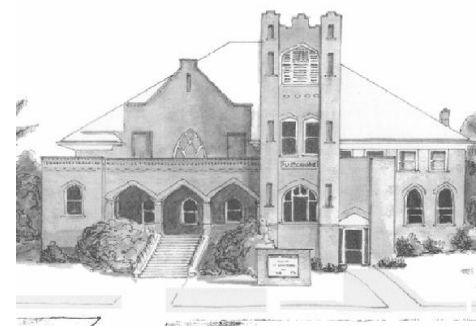
*Pastor Sue*

## ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Great news! Session has decided to begin in person worship again next Sunday, June 21st at 10:00 am. We have been busy making plans to provide safety measures suggested by the CDC. Please see this weeks letter for more information.

Thank you to all who helped with our Community Dinner last evening!

Linda Pinney will be on vacation June 12-19. *The phone and e-mail will be checked periodically during this time*



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*“Worshipping Together ... Even While Apart”*

June 14 2020

**Happy Birthday!**

06/14 Gladys Melton

06/14 Linda Volosin

06/15 Nancy Fry

06/21 Nancy Reinhardt

06/24 Deborah Bonam

*To prepare our hearts and minds for worship,  
let us take a few moments in silent prayer.*

**Call to Worship** (based on Psalm 100:1-4):

**Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth! Worship the Lord with gladness, and come before him with songs of joy. Know that the Lord is God; it is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Give thanks to him and praise his name!**

\*Song: "Let All Things Now Living" # 389

**Call to Confession:**

*Trusting in God's love for us in Jesus Christ, let us confess our sins to the Lord.*

Unison Prayer of Confession: **Eternal and ever-faithful God, we are glad to be called your people, but we confess that the way in which we live does not always bring honor to your name. You know how often we disobey your Word and disregard your will. We are quick to make excuses and slow to ask forgiveness. Forgive us, gracious God, and in your mercy change our hearts so that in all things our lives will be a testimony to your power to make all things new – even us, Lord, even us. Amen.**

**Assurance of Pardon:**

**People of God, this is the Good News of the gospel: Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and promises that no one who comes to him will ever be turned away. So take hold of God's promise; know that your sins are forgiven in Christ Jesus, and live a new life for him. Amen.**

**Prayers of the People and the Lord's Prayer**

Include your prayers of thanksgiving and intercession.

*Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins as we forgive those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.*

**The Presentation of our Tithes and Offerings**

*Tithes and offerings can be either mailed to the church or donated online via the church website or Zelle.*

**Prayer of Dedication (in unison):**

**The earth is yours, O Lord, and all that is within it is yours as well. We would have nothing ... we would be nothing ... if it were not for your gracious provision. Receive our tithes and offerings, our service and our devotion as signs of our grateful thanks. In Christ we pray, Amen.**

Scripture: John 16: 5-7

Message: "Abiding Presence, Abiding Help"

HYMN: "Come, Holy Spirit" # 150

Benediction

Closing Refrain: "God be With You 'Til We Meet Again"

## “Abiding Presence, Abiding Help”

*John 16: 5-7 (14:16, & Romans 8:26-27)*

Today is the second Sunday after Pentecost, the day the promised Holy Spirit was poured out upon the gathered believers, marking the beginning of Christ’s Church. Our text this morning, however, takes us back to what we call Maundy Thursday. Of the four Gospels, John gives us the longest and most detailed account of Jesus’ last night with his disciples – the night before he was arrested and taken away to be killed.

Jesus, of course, knew what was about to happen. He tried to prepare the disciples beforehand, but they either failed to understand or didn’t want to hear it. But he knew the time had come; he had only a few hours left. So he told them plainly that he would be with them only a little longer. And it is in this context—his imminent departure – that Jesus says this: (John 16: 5-7):

*Now I am going to him who sent me, yet none of you asks me, “Where are you going?” Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief. But I tell you the truth, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.”*

Five times in chapters 14 through 16, Jesus speaks about the Advocate, whom the Father will send. We know from our own experience that LAST words are often LASTING words. Whether it be final whispers from the lips of the dying, or parting goodbyes from friends, last words often remain firmly fixed in our memories, to be recalled throughout our lives. Surely, it would have been that way with Jesus’ words to his disciples.

So later, as they spoke with one another about that night, they would have remembered and clung to Jesus’ promise to send them “another” who would be with them forever. Of course, he is referring to the Holy Spirit – though, in John’s Gospel, Jesus does not use that term. The word we find instead is *parakletos* – Paraclete – not a word we hear in every-day English! The NIV uses the word Advocate – again, not something we use very often. Your Bible may say something like, Helper, Comforter, or Counselor. Certainly, the Holy Spirit helps, comforts, and counsels us. But there is more, much more. So I want to go back to the original word. *Paraclete* is made up of two simple and very frequently used Greek words: *para*, meaning “alongside” and *kaleo*, which means “to call” or “to summon.” And it is this One – this third person of the Holy Trinity – who is called, or summoned, to come alongside. Come alongside WHOM? To come alongside Jesus’ disciples, to fulfill his promise that they would not be left alone. Hold that thought for just a moment, if you will.

I have a confession. I find it difficult to read some parts of the Gospel of John. Out of the four Gospel writers, it is John who speaks most extensively about Jesus' divine nature. I don't struggle with that – but it is John who uses the most “mystical” language. Among other things, the Gospel of John is absolutely chock-full of verses in which Jesus speaks of being one with the Father, and desiring that his followers would be one with him just as he is one with the Father.

The importance of this unity, this community, this “one ness” and abiding cannot be overstated. Forty times in his Gospel, Jesus uses the Greek word “menein” -- and most of them are found in that final night with his disciples. *Menein* translates as abide or remain or stay. For example the famous passage in chapter 15, about the vine and the branches. “I am the vine, you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit. [But] apart from me you can do nothing.”

Forty times! Jesus isn't just talking about an abstract philosophical connection. He is talking about a deep, intimate, personal relationship. We easily relate to how the disciples loved Jesus and didn't want to face the prospect of him leaving. We may not stop to consider that, since Jesus truly loved his disciples, he didn't want to be separated from THEM, either.

He KNOWS what lies ahead: betrayal, arrest, the cross – suffering & death. He also knows that if he does NOT go to the cross, human-kind will forever be lost to sin. The decision was made long ago ... and Jesus goes forward. He knows that God's good purposes will be fulfilled and there will be great joy to come. But tonight, they face darkness. He did not want his friends to feel left alone, to BE left alone.

So (and again this was part of God's plan), Jesus makes the wonderful promise about sending “the one called to come alongside.” Though it's awkward to think of the Holy Spirit in that way, it is also a very PERSONAL depiction.

You see, when Jesus promised the Paraclete, he promised not “a” paraclete, but another: “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever.” (14:16) The Greek word here is *allos* – *another of the same kind*. He could have used the word *heteros*, indicating a different kind of Advocate, but he uses *allos*. Not only this word choice important for what would later develop into our understanding of the Trinity, with equality between the Three Persons of God ... it also speaks very beautifully of the WAY in which Jesus does not leave his disciples, the WAY he does not leave us as orphans:

He promises one *like himself*, who loves and cares for us like HE does.

The Holy Spirit is many things: Helper, Comforter, Spirit of Truth, Life-giver, the one who convicts the heart of sin, reminds us of God's promises and assures us of God's love. He is the Giver of spiritual gifts for the good of the Church,  
offering us hope, helping us discern God's will,  
empowering us to help other believers,  
giving us spiritual strength and filling us with joy.

That doesn't even begin to scratch the surface of all the things Scripture tells us about who the Holy Spirit is, and how he works in and through each believer. The Holy Spirit even prays for us when we do not know what to pray for!

Because of everything Scripture tells us the Holy Spirit DOES, there can be a tendency to think of the Spirit as ... well, a tool, or a set of tools, some thing we call upon in times of need. But the Holy Spirit is not a thing at all ... Rather, he is a Being, a Divine Person – who, like Jesus, cares for us individually and personally, the Advocate who comes alongside us and remains with us forever -- God's abiding presence and abiding help.

Friends, Scripture says, "How great is the love the Father has lavished upon us, that we should be called the children of God." (1 John 3:1)

I invite you to think about this with me, in the coming weeks and months: How great is the love Jesus has shown us, in asking the Father to send us the Paraclete!

Let us pray ...