



Sharing the Love of Christ

First United Presbyterian Church (PCUSA)

PO Box 37

1000 Douglas Avenue

Las Vegas New Mexico 87701

PASTOR'S PONDERINGS

APRIL 2020

Dear Friends,

Stress is running high. One of my clergy colleagues noticed that he's seeing subtle signs of stress on Facebook posts—people being a little shorter with others, a little more critical. At the same time, we're seeing so much beauty and generosity on social media. A couple of days ago, I saw a link to a short video of people fighting over a package of toilet paper in a store followed by a video of two music teacher colleagues singing a song for their students. Such videos are symptomatic of our times; we respond differently to stress and the many emotions we are experiencing.

I admit that I'm no stranger to stress. These last couple of weeks have presented me with a steep learning curve. Not being an infectious disease expert, I've not learned how to deal with this crisis. None of us has. As my clergy friends are reminding each other, there was no seminary class titled Pastoring During a Pandemic 101. Please bear with me as together we figure out how we as the church operate differently, and remember that all of us are dealing with the stresses of uncertainty and worry.

On a personal note, I find myself concerned about my family. Tegan is now teaching online, which is particularly challenging for a teacher whose subject—choir—is by definition a community event. She recently talked to us about her lesson plans, which give her students flexibility to choose from a variety of engaging assignments. I'm proud of her. Tegan's partner, Rosalie, is also working from home. But there are still shopping and necessary errands to do, and this mom worries about the possibility of COVID-19 for her adult child who has asthma. Mixed emotions.

Both our daughter Emily, a social worker serving the homeless, and son-in-law Pat, a nurse, continue to work as their jobs are deemed essential. Two grandchildren are at home during this time of school closures; the other two continue to be in day care with the children of others whose work is essential. Pat works nights and then works with the older children until mid-afternoon; Emily works from morning until mid-afternoon, then attends to the children so Pat can sleep before his 11 p.m. shift. She works from home in the evening after the kids are asleep. I worry about the stress they are under with this demanding schedule and, of course, their exposure to the virus on their jobs and doing the things necessary to keep a family going. I'm also proud that they continue to serve those who are so vulnerable at this time. Mixed emotions.

On a church note, I am working mostly from home. The number of things to consider when moving from Sunday morning worship in the sanctuary to providing an online worship experience has surprised me. I am so grateful to Jeff Salman and D.R. Palmer for providing the technical know-how to offer options, to Em Krall for enthusiastically offering her musical talent, and to those who have been or will be serving as worship leader/singer. For now, a small group of four or five meet in the sanctuary to record worship. It could be that, if restrictions get tighter, we will need to look at a new way of doing this.

Some committee meetings continue via email, conference call or video conferencing, as does Session. I am preparing Holy Week worship; see the article about upcoming worship opportunities, below. Beginning the week of March 30, you will have the opportunity to join three virtual social gatherings each week via Zoom. Again, see the details later in the newsletter. I plan to also start some daily devotionals online soon; stay tuned for more about that. I am working with Richard Lindeborg to decide the best approach to continuing education/discussion opportunities.

Of course, all of this is fraught with those mixed emotions, too: the stress of doing a lot of things in a completely new way, the worry about all of you during this time (I want to know how everyone is doing), worry over those who are ill, the joy of seeing faces on Zoom for meetings and gatherings, gratitude for those who are helping me and our church family in so many ways. (continued on Page 2)

APRIL 2020

WORSHIP TIDBITS



As we move to online worship, several options present themselves. We originally wanted to stream our services live, but had issues with bandwidth in the sanctuary. Rather than live stream a “glitchy” worship service, in which you as viewers may experience frozen video or other technical issues, we have opted to record worship that will be available to you through a variety of sources. We’ll share the recording live on Zoom Sunday morning at 10:30; you can follow the instructions in this newsletter to get ready to Zoom with us! You’ll also find worship on our Facebook page (First United Presbyterian Church Las Vegas—the one with our 2020 logo); there will be a link on the website as well (lvpresbyterian.org).

LET’S GET TOGETHER!

Starting Sunday, March 29, we will have three social gatherings via Zoom each week. You can download the app on your computer or you can call in by phone. Here’s the schedule:

Sunday morning fellowship following worship at 11:30. Grab a cup of coffee, sit down at your table, and join us for a new way of doing Sunday fellowship.

Coffee with Katie, Tuesday mornings at 9. We’ll chat over coffee/tea/juice and maybe breakfast if you’d like so we can check in on each other and share stories.

Thursday Teatime, Thursday afternoons at 4. Not a morning person? Need some more interaction? Fix yourself a nice cup of tea (or other beverage of your choice) and settle in for a visit with your church family.

TO JOIN ANY FUPC EVENTS VIA ZOOM:

Open your web browser and go to <https://us04web.zoom.us/j/5739200081>

If you haven’t been on Zoom before, you’ll see instructions for downloading the Zoom app and allowing your camera (if you have one) and microphone to be used by Zoom, and then the meeting will open.

If you are new to Zoom, we recommend going to the link above sometime before the event so that you can get the Zoom app set up ahead of time. It takes a few minutes.

If you have the Zoom app, you can use the link above or you can just open the app, click Join, and enter the meeting id. **The meeting ID for all public church events is 573-920-0081.**

If you don’t have a computer but want **to join by phone, call 312-626-7699** and enter the ID number when prompted. Please note this is a Chicago number, so if your phone plan does not have unlimited calls, you may incur long-distance charges.

PASTOR’S PONDERINGS - continued from Page 1

And so, I am working to bring my fears and worries together with my gratitude and joys, trusting that “all things work together for good for those who love God” (Romans 8:28). Yes; we are seeing suffering and death; we are mourning with a world in grief. But let us pray that we can serve God and God’s people by helping to bring good out of this crisis—the good of commitment to unify rather than divide, to care for those most vulnerable, to put love of people above love of profit.

Know that God walks with us in our time of trouble and has given us the wisdom of people who are guiding us now. So, do what those wise people are asking of us, not only for yourself but for all of us. Stay home unless you are part of the essential workforce. Go out only for essential needs. Pray for those who are ill and those who are doing essential jobs. Mourn those around the world who have died and pray for their families. Spend time thinking about how this crisis speaks to your spirituality and your convictions.

With thanks for all of you,

Pastor Katie



CLERK'S CORNER

As promised, I'm pleased to report to you that the Session minutes and register came through examination on March 7 with just two exceptions. The Session minutes had no report of an audit of church finances or insurance coverage. Presbyteries recommend that churches have an audit of the church finances each year by people not involved in the routine handling of church money, like our office manager, treasurer or volunteer counters. This year the audit will be done by the Time, Talent and Treasure Committee, whose report will be noted in the session minutes. The church insurance is handled by the Trustees (Van Swan, Tom Trigg and Lisa Weinstein), and their review of insurance will be reported to Session and recorded in the minutes. Both of these measures protect the church and its resources.

Speaking of resources, I want to remind you that while we are not meeting for worship, meetings, rehearsals, etc., the work of the church still goes forward and our staff is working hard. So, we need to continue to support that work with our time, talent and treasure. If you haven't explored doing your offering online, now might be a good time to do that. You can set the amount, frequency, duration, and destination (where you want your donation to go) of your giving quickly and efficiently in the online donation program. I also remind you that the church pays our 'per capita' fees to the Presbytery each year. This money supports the work of the mid-councils, presbyteries and synods, and the national church. Each of us can help by reimbursing our church for our individual per capita, which is \$35. Just write per capita, which means 'per head' by the way, in the memo line or designate per capita if you donate online.

Karyl Lyne, Clerk of Session



WORSHIP WITH US DURING HOLY WEEK

It is disappointing that we won't have our full range of ecumenical Holy Week services this year, but pandemic or not, Christ will be risen and we will celebrate!

Palm Sunday, April 5 – Join us at 10:30 on Zoom or join in worship on Facebook or via our website link.

Good Friday, April 10 – Join us at 7 p.m. on Zoom, Facebook, or via the website link for a Tenebrae service. If you choose to watch this service at a different time, I encourage you to watch in a darkened room.

Easter, April 12 – Join us at 10:30 on Zoom or join in worship on Facebook or via our website link.

Watch your email for further updates about these services!



DID YOU KNOW?

Over the next weeks, through our 150th Anniversary, a factoid about the church, its activities, projects and programs will be included in the weekly Happenings email. If you have a memory or photo you would like to see included, send to fsvandermeer@gmail.com. These are intended to be brief blurbs, quick reads that remind us of our heritage while celebrating our steadfast faithfulness as exemplified by our theme: Seeds. Roots. Branches.

APRIL 2020



M&P invites members to remember the One Great Hour of Sharing national offering which goes to Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) 32%, Presbyterian Hunger Program (PHP) 36% and Self-Development of People (SDOP) 32%. Since we are not having our customary Lenten Luncheons after church this year, please be mindful of the very important programs this offering supports and donate as you are able.

Joyce Litherland has asked me to invite the congregation to participate the 2020 Birthday Offering of Presbyterian Women. This offering was created in 1922 with women donating a penny for each year of their lives to support Miss Dowd's School for Girls in Japan. Since then more than \$36 million has supported projects around the world. This year the recipients of the birthday offering are The Center for Social Assistance to the Disabled, Family and Children assisted living facility in Davydovo, Russia; GAP Ministries of Augusta, Georgia; Community Presbyterian Child Learning Center in Payson, AZ; and Liberty Community Church in Minneapolis, MN. As always, we thank you for your generosity to the above efforts.

On another note, we have received word that the Presbyterian Mission Agency is working to bring our mission co-workers home in the face of the coronavirus. Some of the co-workers have elected to remain where they are, but they are encouraged to come home.

Karyl Lyne, Chair



LENTEN EMAIL-BASED STUDY OF *SAINT MAYBE* ENDS THE FIRST WEEK OF APRIL

The Bible-Based Class for Adults and Youth has one more session to go in its study of Ann Tyler's novel *Saint Maybe*, led by Pastor Katie Palmer.

Since the suspension of in-church activities, Pastor Katie has been sending out discussion questions to participants each week by email. The group uses "reply all" to share their comments with each other.

The questions for the first week of April are based on Chapter 10—"Recovering from the Hearts-of-Palm Flu." There will be no class the week of Easter.

If you are reading the book but have not been receiving the weekly discussion questions, contact Katie and get added to the mailing list.

Richard Lindeborg is coordinating an effort to come up with a format and curriculum for the classes after Easter. If you would like to have input on whether:

- Classes should continue via email or switch to a video conferencing service such as Zoom;
- Conferencing, if chosen, should be at the regular 9:30 Sunday morning time, during the day on Saturday, or during some evening; or
- Classes should be in book-based series or topic-based single class sessions.

Please get in touch with Richard at ralindeborg@cs.com.

A GIFT TO FUPC



After Elizabeth Hansbury's death in 2017, we received word that Ms. Hansbury had left a percentage of her estate to First United Presbyterian Church in Las Vegas. In 2019, we received the first portion of that bequest—a check for \$44,400. Early this year, we received the remaining portion—\$106,560. Session will be discussing how to best use these monies and had already decided to tithe any unrestricted bequest monies to our mission programs, including the Mustard Seed Grant Program. It's fitting that we share the words of this generous woman's obituary here. If you knew Ms. Hansbury or her family, please share your memories with Pastor Katie so that we can in turn share them with the congregation.

Elizabeth "Betty" Hansbury, 92, was born March 15, 1925, died as she wanted, at her home on Wednesday, April 12, 2017. Betty was preceded in death by her parents. Betty, an only child, was born in Las Vegas, NM to Arthur H. and Dorothy W. Hansbury. She graduated from Las Vegas High School, where she enjoyed sports including skiing, hiking, tennis, basketball, baseball and softball. She graduated from the University of Colorado and received her Master's degree from New Mexico Highlands University. Her post graduate work was done at the University of New Mexico. She was a Professor at Meridian College for Women in State College, PA, for several years. Betty returned to New Mexico and worked at Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory and spent the rest of her life in Los Alamos. She traveled widely, often with groups from Los Alamos, enjoying her trips to Europe and Asia, including Japan, China, and Greece, and trips throughout the United States. She is survived by friends, including her very special friend and longtime caregiver, Geneva Fernandez.

Easter Prayer

By Sharon Vander Meer

There can be no safer place to be
than in the certainty of God's love.

Every bumpy, curvy road
can be made straight
by this assurance:

God's love and protection
are always present.

Problems don't disappear;
our ability to manage them
is strengthened in the light of his promise
to be with us always.

Christ lived that we might live.
Christ died that we would be saved.
Christ arose that we might have hope.

God knows our need;
God gives us tools
to be wise and courageous
in the most difficult of times.

He does not forget us
when we are less than faithful.

He waits for us to return to the rock of his refuge.

Thank you, God, for your presence.

In times of uncertainty,
relieve our anxiety,
give us strength and courage day-by-day.

– Amen

Be my rock of refuge, to which I can always go. Psalm 71:3

TRUST

Joan Chittister, *The Breath of the Soul: Reflections on Prayer*

It's when we begin to take life for granted that we most need to learn to pray.

The truth is that all the while we are making plans for what we will do next and how we will go about doing it, life happens. The stock market falls, the job disappears, the plane doesn't leave on time, the project fails. Everything we mapped out for our lives, for our future, for the moment, simply goes awry.

Then, the God-problem raises its ugly head. Why did God do this to me? What did I do to deserve this? Why doesn't God fix it? How is it that God ignores our prayer? As George Bernard Shaw writes, "Most people do not pray; they only beg." But somewhere along the line, if we are ever to grow up spiritually, the whole notion that prayer is about learning how to make life what I want it to be, dissolves. Obviously, it doesn't work.

Depression sets in. We stop praying completely. We stop going to church. We begin to toy with the notion that the whole prayer thing has been some kind of hoax. Did we say the wrong prayers? Did we overlook some part of the ritual that would certainly have assured our success? Does God not love us?

In these early stages of prayer, prayer itself is the question. Worse: God is the question, too. So, what are we missing here?

The purpose of prayer is the process of falling into God. As the mystics say, we are beginning to learn that God alone is enough.

The truth is that none of us really knows where we are going and must never take it for granted that we do. We can plan our lives, but we cannot guarantee them.

When our prayers are not answered, we know only one thing for sure: The challenge of life now is to live it differently. And it will be through prayer that we discover how to do that. Seeing Jesus being driven out of town, we come to understand that we cannot expect more. Seeing Jesus depressed in the Garden of Olives, we understand that depression is not the loss of faith, it is the moment of faith. Seeing Jesus lose favor with the authorities, we learn that authorities are not the final measure of our lives.

Then we come to prayer free of the desires that bind us, free to live life in God, free to choose trust over certainty—which really means free to choose God over self.

APRIL 2020



CELEBRATING 150 YEARS OF SERVICE
by D.R. Palmer, 2020 Planning Committee Chair

Our new logo shows a tree with deep roots, leafy green branches, and many seeds, along with the words Seeds, Roots, and Branches. These three words describe us pretty well. We help plant seeds for new community services, as well as seeds of faith. We have deep roots in this community and our Presbyterian heritage. And we branch out beyond our walls to work and worship together with our neighbor, the other, the suffering, and the rejected.

As most of you know, the church was started in 1870 by John Annin and José Ynes Perea as a Presbyterian mission at the corner of Socorro and Chavez streets in Old Town. Many Presbyterian missions were founded around the same time in New Mexico as Presbyterianism expanded in the West.

It is no surprise that the church started a school at around the same time it was founded. Presbyterians value education, and as it was explained to me, for many years it was the only school in town, and many ranchers and others brought their children to the school to get their education. Just as that school was a seed planted, it was just the beginning.

We can't easily separate seeds, roots, and branches. We can consider the Samaritan House organization as a seed, because it originally began in the Old Town Mission building, but it is also a root, because we have been a supporter of Samaritan House for decades and it is part of our legacy and who we are. It is also one of the branches, because we are still involved in Samaritan House and its outreach to the community, particularly through cooking a meal on Fridays for Samaritan House to serve.

Some of our roots, such as our Christian faith and Presbyterian tradition, go back centuries. Our roots in the community go back generations in Las Vegas for some families. Our roots in service to the community form a strong legacy that inspires us to continue that work today. Some of the seeds we planted have grown to stand on their own. Samaritan House is an example of this. Other seeds, such as the seeds of faith we plant in our children and in each other bear fruit that God sees, but perhaps we are not around to witness ourselves. Through it all, we branch out to share the love of God with each other and with everyone, because we are all God's children.

Mustard Seed is a great example of the multi-level impact of projects. It started in 1999 as a community outreach program and since then has awarded more than \$150,000 in small grants to the Las Vegas community and beyond. It has roots in the past, its grants help plant the seeds of new projects, and its branches reach throughout the city.

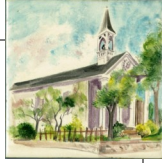
Friday Night Fun is another reason why we celebrate. Since it began last year, it has welcomed children, youth and families to the Old Town Mission Community Center. Led by The SPOT Youth Team, we provide free pizza, games, dancing, singing, and an all-around good time for UWC students, high school students, and others from all sides of town. The events help plant seeds of friendship and nurture the roots and branches of community.

Deep and Wide contemplative services, which started in 2016, are times when we pray beyond words. With repetition of simple Taizé songs and with silence, we welcome everyone of any faith and no faith to come and spend time together in love. These services water the seeds of spiritual growth and strengthen the roots and branches of love.

Our Sunday morning worship embodies the message: we welcome all, including those from the LGBTQ community, those who have been wounded physically or spiritually, folks who are homeless, folks who are well-off, folks who have been here for generations, folks who have just arrived in town. Together, we aspire to grow seeds, deepen our roots, and spread our branches to build an inclusive community of love.

First United Presbyterian Church

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Website: www.lvpresbyterian.org

Facebook: Las Vegas First United Presbyterian (NM)

Email: fupc.nm@gmail.com

Sunday Schedule

8:30 a.m. - Jumpstart Breakfast:

9:30 a.m. - Bible Based Study

10:30 a.m. - Sunday Worship

Fellowship Hour following the worship service

*No importa de dónde eres,
estamos contentos que seas
nuestro vecino.*

No matter where you are
from, we're glad you're
our neighbor.

لا يهم اين ولدتم، ولكننا
سعداء انكم جيراننا.

APRIL 2020

happy
birthday!

Deep and Wide

*A Contemplative Service at the
Old Town Mission*

5:15 p.m. – 6:15 p.m.

Second and Fourth Tuesdays
at the Old Town Mission Church

This is an ecumenical gathering open to all,
sponsored by FUPC.

APRIL BIRTHDAYS

2nd Carol Linder
4th Trudi Samuelson
9th Bernie Meadows
10th Alex Ditton
19th Beth Urech
21st Art Trujillo
22nd Frank Hager
24th Carrol Pearson
30th Judy Long



Communion is normally offered each Sunday from October 6 through Pentecost (May 31, 2020) and on the first and third Sundays of each month from June through September. We do not celebrate Communion on the fifth Sunday of a month due to the addition of the Healing Liturgy to the service.



Samaritan House Food Donations For APRIL

Boxed potatoes or any boxed entree
Coffee and Tea are always appreciated