

Visions

April 2020



“Holy Distance In”

A friend of mine recently posted: “This is more than I planned to give up for Lent this year!” She was referring, of course, to the dramatic change in life-style we have all experienced in the current pandemic. We are learning new ways of coping, new ways of being in relationships, discovering new resources in ourselves and others, even learning new language. I bet you didn’t know what a “PPE” or an N95 was until just a few weeks ago! (“Personal Protective Equipment,” think masks, gowns and gloves, and specialized masks with built-in respirators.) Most likely you now know who Dr Fauci is and that COVID 19 is a particular coronavirus, of which there are many. And you know the term “social distancing” because you are doing it.

Recently I heard Eric Law coin a new term: **“Holy Distance In.”** Try this one on for size. Law says it reframes what we are doing---staying away from each other, a response that can be based in fear. **“Holy Distance In” is honoring each other’s space and wellness, not based on fear and self-protection but love and respect and the protection for another, respecting boundaries and creating sacred space.** (Women, says Law, have been asking for this for a long time!)

What if we started to think of the distance between us as “sacred space?” What if we maintain holy distance in order to include the other? Law gives the example of ballroom dancing: it is the space between the dancers that makes the dance graceful and beautiful. Sometimes we get too close--physically, emotionally, to others and scare people away. Sometimes we assume others comfort or need or even right to space and charge in, taking up not only space, but failing to recognize the truth, the pain, the joy of someone else’s reality; instead, we assume it is like our own. People of privilege (that’s most of us!) are the usual offenders here. We think our ideas, our attempts to rescue, fix, provide, “help” are what others want and need when in reality we would do well to step back, to

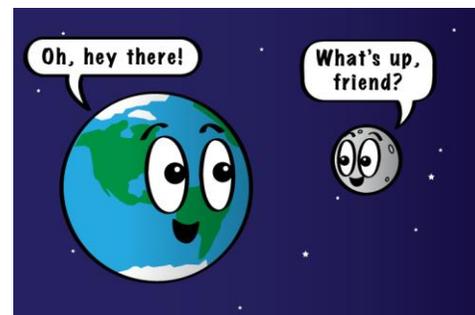
truly hear and see the “other” for who and what they are and what they can teach us.

In this unique season, how do we make the distance between us holy, graceful and gracious? We need to see one another from a different angle, a wider lens (Notice how live news has had to change its camera angles!) Try this:

- Pray that the space (physical, theological, emotional, cultural, etc.) between you and one other specific person in your life might become holy and gracious and then discover what that means
- Reach out to someone who you feel distant from; perhaps this is a season when the two of you can recreate the “space” between you
- Call someone you haven’t spoken to in a long time; invite God to create holy and gracious space between you
- Initiate a conversation by voice, text, email, letter with someone of a different race, ethnicity, educational or theological background, orientation, gender, country of origin, etc. and allow God to create a holy and gracious space between you in order to listen and really hear another’s life story, point of view.
- Use the space you have in your life (now that you are not commuting, running to meetings, going to the store) to create a holy space for God’s presence, mindfully, intentionally deepening your sense of being in God’s presence.

We can fall apart or we can create holy distance within and between us--space the Spirit of God can transform into life-giving, life-shaping moments and relationships. Be creative! Be open! Make this a time of nurturing respectful, honoring, loving relationships in order to include others.

Blessings,
Marcia



Holy Week Worship at FBC: Sharing Suffering, Sharing Life



Perhaps it is *good* that Holy Week worship will not take its usual course at FBC or few other places this year; perhaps it will awaken us to the meaning of this time in our spiritual lives together in a real way. Maybe for the first time, we can enter into the suffering of Jesus in a visceral way.

Note that we will worship “live” during Holy Week but *transcripts will be available for you to use at home if you chose not to sign on.*

Palm Sunday, April 5:

We will worship LIVE at 10:30 via Zoom

Join us and feel free to share the link with friends or family members. You need only an internet connection to be present; you can “come in” with audio only, or if your device allows you, audio and video. (Even though this would normally be a “first Sunday communion service, we will not have communion on Palm Sunday; we will have it Maundy Thursday; see next paragraph)

Maundy Thursday, April 9:

Live Worship via Zoom, 7 pm

This will be a quiet service of scripture, readings, music and communion. In order to be prepared to share in communion **you will need to have something to drink and something to eat that will serve as “communion”**. As Baptists, we believe that the elements representing bread and cup are symbols; you can use whatever you have. These symbols remind us of the physical suffering of Jesus, in which we share keenly during this time of pandemic.

Easter Sunday, April 12:

Live Worship via Zoom at 10:30 am

The promise of resurrection and new life is more powerful than ever amid the suffering of these days. Join us as we worship in song and word, celebrating the abiding presence of God and the life God gives us, here, now, in the midst of these world-changing days.

Online Meeting of Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists

In late March, Rev. Dr. Brian Henderson, National Coordinator of the Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists, invited all AWAB clergy and members to an online meeting for the purposes of checking in and sharing ideas for ministry during this time. There were some 12-15 people “present,” including AWAB Board Members; it was an encouraging time of checking in and sharing resources. It’s good to know that our welcoming friends are seeking each other out, sharing God’s love and spirit of hope, and praying with and for one another in these days!

Earth Day 2020: April 19 Take the Challenge!



2020 is the 50th anniversary of the first Earth Day, calling us to love and care for God’s creation. It is interesting to note what this pandemic might be doing for the earth; by slowing down and staying home, we may be giving the earth a much-needed break from our excessive carbon footprint. While our plans for celebrating this milestone are being re-imagined, **I challenge you to learn something new about some aspect of our planet/universe that is being negatively (and positively!) impacted by human existence; what you learn, and share with the rest of us, can influence how we honor God’s creation!**

How? Make this “assignment” part of what occupies you as you are “playing around” on line! Google a topic that interests you. (Ideas: deforestation, water scarcity, carbon footprint, clean eating, biotechnology, earth day history, etc.) If you really want to dive in, go to <https://scholar.google.com/> where you will find scholarly resources. (Just thought I’d slide that in there to keep my teaching skills sharp!)

Together, let’s hear the call to love our planet and to discern what that looks like at FBC!

2020 Census: Did You Do It?



It only takes 10 minutes (or less) to fill out your 2020 census form online or on paper. Do it! It matters to our schools and to our representation in government, just to name a few. Undocumented folks should also fill it out; you don't have to have documentation to be counted and it will not harm but help provide a more accurate description of who we are and what we need from one another! Be counted!

Keeping the Lights On: Financial Update

Thank you to all who have continued your pledge to FBC during these challenging times; your commitment is necessary for our work to continue! For those of you who are experiencing financial hardships, know that the Diaconate (Deb Brauner, chair) and Marcia would like to know of your need so we can find ways to help you.

Please try to give something to FBC if you are able. You can give online at our website (it's safe and secure), you can mail a check to the church office (the CDC says you can't get the virus through the mail) or you can ask your bank to send a check on your behalf (ask to set up "bill pay", even for a one time gift).

Our giving has been down; we will update you when the monthly figures for March are available.

Zoom! To Gather Online With FBC



We have been holding meetings, weekly prayer and learning community and now some worship online via an application called Zoom. Last week we had 30 people online all at the same time, talking and seeing each other virtually. (You can choose to turn off your camera; if your computer doesn't have a camera, you can still participate by

listening and speaking). If this technology is new for you (it was for me just a few weeks ago!) or you are unsure if you know how to get on Zoom or what your computer does or doesn't have, please contact Kristi at office@fbcpottstown.org or Marcia (610-585-4322 or marciabbailey@gmail.com) or Mike Heniz (michael.william.heinz@gmail.com) to get help, **preferably before Sunday morning!** We can walk you through the process, help manage your computer, and give you a chance to do a "dry run" before you really want to get on! (Note: It's difficult to manage this *while* we are also running a worship service or learning opportunity)

Use these tips to "gather" online in the next Zoom service/meeting with FBC:

1. Check the FBC website or your update email from FBC for the link to the Zoom gathering. One is sent/posted on Fridays.
2. Click on the link from the device you'd like to use to join the meeting.
 - a. If you've used Zoom before, you will be taken directly to the meeting. You may have to wait a few moments as Pastor Marcia starts the meeting on her end.
 - b. If you've never used Zoom, you will be prompted to download the app. Zoom will lead you through the process, and it usually only takes moments. Do it!
 - c. If you want to download the application in advance, just click on the link any time and go through the process. You will be able to reconnect when the time for the meeting comes by clicking the link again.
3. If you want to enable your video (so people can see you), make sure your computer or device camera is active and pointing at you. Then look on the bottom left-hand corner of the Zoom window. Find the video camera icon and make sure it is activated. (If it has a slash through it you have it turned off; click the video camera icon at the bottom-left of the Zoom window to turn it on).
4. Be sure your sound is active: at the bottom-left corner of the Zoom window you will see a microphone icon beside the video camera icon. If there is a slash through the microphone icon you are muted. Click the microphone icon to make your audio active.

Let's Connect with Jeanne Petrosky



It seems like everywhere you look around FBC Jeanne is there! And she is usually engaged in helping in some way. Let's learn more about what is behind her ministry to us.

Q. What are you passionate about?

A. Working with those who want to be part of the change they want to see. People who have similar goals to me - who are like-minded.

Q. What is it that energizes you?

A. I can lose track of time when given a project of organizing, or making sense out of a mess so it can be used efficiently and effectively.

Q. When did this become a passion for you?

A. My parents spending time and allowing me to make mistakes and explore gave me so much character. My Dad was so patient with building things together. My Mom taught me to sew. My appreciation of and need for simplicity came when I started doing art shows in 1987. My world was a 10' by 10' space so it better be inviting and personal!

Q. How might we see you engage in this passion?

A. Organizing spaces, picking up litter, weeding, painting - rooms and art.

Q. Who else joins you in this?

A. With organizing and simplifying the most fun is working with like-minded people. With art it is certainly by myself and the Great Creator.

Q. Anything else you would like to tell us about this?

A. Beauty started as a child. My personal joke is that I came out of the womb with crayons.

Thank you, Jeanne. You have helped to change FBC for the better. We appreciate you!

Jane Gruen for the Diaconate

Directory Update!

During this time of physical distancing, you can keep up with folks by phoning, emailing or sending a card or letter. You could remember those of our congregation whose ability to get out is usually limited:

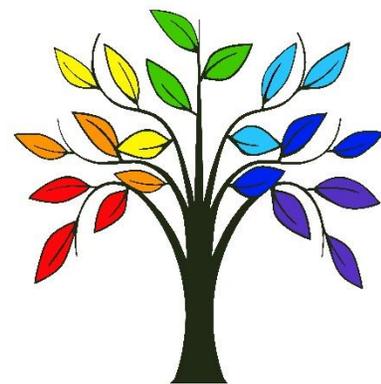
Lois and Charles Hayer
Chestnut Knoll
120 W 5th St., Rm 207
Boyertown, PA 19512

Ron Gumbarge
575 Pine Ford Rd
Pottstown, PA 19464

Dorothy Miller
1152 Ben Franklin Hwy-East, #222
Douglassville, PA 19518

Charles Rivenburg
Norriton Square Nursing & Rehab
1700 Pine St., Rm 304
Norristown, PA 19401

Arline Gohean
Manatawny Manor
30 Old Schuylkill Rd, Rm C303
Pottstown, PA 19465



First Baptist Church
301 King Street
Pottstown, PA 19464

www.fbcpottstown.org | 610-326-2273