

Visions • June 2020



The Way Forward

Over these last weeks of stay-at-home, isolation and quarantine, I have repeatedly heard people long for “the way it was” before the world was engulfed in a global pandemic. “I can’t wait for things to return to normal” is how it’s often phrased. Perhaps you say it or think it, or live with someone who does. I’ve thought a lot about this wish, this longing. I know it stems from the uncertainty and disruption of life’s routine. I know it reflects a desire to let down one’s guard, to relax and resume whatever one’s life looked like before this happened. I know it speaks to the desire of many, and yet, I find it does not speak to me.

I know I am privileged. I have not one job but two, and they have continued. Because of that I have food on my table and a home to sleep in each night. I know if I get sick, I can call a doctor who knows me and my medical history. I know that I can isolate myself in comfort, without having to share my space with others and I can stay at home for a long time without having to risk encountering anyone who might, knowingly or not, be sick. That’s privilege. That’s *not* how most of our Pottstown community lives. It’s *not* how most of our country lives. It’s *not* how most of the world lives.

In spite of my privilege, I don’t have (much) desire to go “back”: “back” to thinking I knew who and what was “essential,” back to pretending that my privilege was the result of my hard work and somehow deserved, back to thinking that we could slowly work our way into our Pottstown neighborhood with casual, annual gatherings and that would be enough. It is clear to me like never before that people who drive trucks and pack groceries and clean hospitals and process lab tests and deliver everything we ask for are “essential;” it is obvious (at least to me) that everyone, but especially brown and black people, need affordable health care, not just in a pandemic but every day. It’s undeniable that school children in urban settings in this day and age need access to

technology (computers *and* internet), and that food security is a bigger problem than most of us understand. Going “back” means pretending we haven’t seen all that this pandemic exposed; going “back” means ignoring the growing disparities between those with privilege and those without, going “back” means turning away from facing the fragility of the lives of many who live in our small community, who are our literal and physical neighbors, to say nothing of our neighbors in Christ.

What will we do as a community of faith to confront and respond to the needs we knew where there but until now, could pretend to overlook? How will we use this pandemic as an opportunity to invest ourselves in the lives of those who aren’t privileged, but who are equally gifted and loved, valued and cared for by our Merciful, Benevolent God? We are called to be a witness to love and grace, to wholeness for all people; what will that look like in the days and seasons to come?

We have made a small but powerful beginning: masks. We are becoming known as the place where people in our neighborhood can get them, free. We may be weary of making them but the need is still there; can we continue to do this? Can we invite others to join us? We are planning to encourage and support literacy in our community with a “little free library” (see the details in this newsletter). What else can we do? How else can we represent God’s love, God’s compassion, God’s justice to our neighbors in need?

Rather than going “back,” I want to invite you to pray with me that God would set our sights on going forward with new determination to make a difference in the lives of the people in our neighborhood. After this, nothing is going to be the same...I hope.

Prayerfully,
Marcia

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Congratulations to Jennifer Purington!



Our love and best wishes are shared with Jennifer Purington who graduates from Twin Valley High School this month! You can add your congratulations by sending a card to Jennifer at this address:

371 Hanna Kurtz Rd
Birdsboro, PA 19508

And Congratulations to Us!



We have received word that First Baptist Church has been voted into the membership of the Philadelphia Baptist Association (PBA) at the May meeting of the Board of Directors. We originally expected to be welcomed into PBA at their annual meeting May 2nd, but that gathering needed to be cancelled. This is the culmination of a year-long process of our own discernment as well as a visit and conversation with Rev. Dr. James McJunkin, Executive Minister, who preached (and sang) for us last September. Earlier this year, Myra Forrest, Dennis Landon and Marcia Bailey represented FBC at the PBA Commission on the Ministry, expressing our desire to join PBA, whose values of inclusion and diversity are more aligned with our own than our former region, The American Baptist Churches of Pa and De. We look forward to being officially welcomed into PBA and to discovering ways to interact with others in our service to the wider community.

Little Free Library



In many places in Pottstown, you can walk down a street and find a "Little Free Library." What is it? It's just what the name says: it is a waterproof box of some kind that holds books that anyone can take. The idea is to share reading materials with others; take one, leave one style.

Inspired by Jane Gruen and affirmed by the Ministry Coordination Team, we are looking into creating two little free libraries on our FBC property, in front of the "park" area on King Street. One of these libraries will be for adults and the second for children. We are recruiting "stewards" to help maintain our libraries and to curate books. This task would require an online meeting to establish protocols and types of material we want to offer and then being responsible for the libraries themselves for a predetermined time frame, perhaps a month at a time. Once we have established how we will maintain and sustain our libraries, we will be asking folks to donate appropriate books and materials we can share. If you are interested in being a steward, please contact Jane, Joel or Marcia.

Necessary Repairs

On April 24th Nancy and Rick Unruh discovered that the second-floor classrooms had water damage. Rick found that the rubber roofing was torn back due to heavy winds and rain. After contacting our insurance company, Guide One, they recommended Rick contact Service Master to clean the inside and Muthard Roofing to do a temporary repair until the insurance adjuster could come out and see the damage. The adjuster came the following week and took pictures and measurements. The roofer came and did a temporary repair, and a couple days later the

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second windstorm came through and ripped off the courtyard side of the rubber roof and some shingles above the sanctuary. The roofer returned and did another temporary repair. Service Master removed all the water, placing fans and dehumidifiers to dry the affected areas, ripping out damaged ceilings and walls in the classrooms, hallway and stairway, and cleaning all the areas of debris.

Our insurance company sent a breakdown of the damage to our rubber roof and sanctuary roof, and the interior of the building. We also found out that the tile flooring is asbestos and has to be replaced. A check was issued to FBC in the amount of \$65,688.61 with the possibility of an additional \$8,539.38. We are currently waiting for estimates for the roof and interior repairs. We are also waiting for the invoice for the temporary work done on the rubber roof to stop the water leaking.

Look for additional updates in our next newsletter.

Nancy Unruh, Building Caretaker

GRANT Us the Strength

Last month we reported that your church officers had applied for three different grants to support the ministry of FBC. Last month we let you know that we did receive monies from the government to cover eight weeks of payroll and other utility expenses, known as the PPP grant. We have since learned that we did not receive the PA Non-Profit Security Grant, but we are delighted that our friends at Bethel Community Church did receive one. While we have not officially received word about our application for funds to support our congregation in creative programing to engage our neighborhood, we were told informally that we will be receiving \$4,400 from The Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation! And, finally we have applied for yet another grant from The American Baptist Home Mission Society for resources to develop our online presence as we envision reaching out to gather a worshipping community beyond our walls. Thank you to all who

participated in envisioning and securing these resources!

June Special Offering is

One Great HOUR O F S H A R I N G

"Let us plant dates even though those who plant them will never eat them," writes Brazilian theologian Rubem Alves. "We must live by the love of what we will never see." Date trees can take a decade to bear fruit and 100 years to reach their full height. The hands that plant such a tree may never rest in that tree's shade. Moved by love, they invest in that unseen future. "We are co-workers in God's service," writes Paul in 1 Corinthians 3. Some of us plant. Some of us water. But God gives the growth. Through One Great Hour of Sharing, we become like date tree planters: we serve the fruitful future to which God calls us. Who knows what growth God may bring when we join hands together across distance, across traditions, and across time for the love of what we may never see?

When we give to One Great Hour of Sharing, we help make all of this new life and growth possible. Through our sharing, we become co-workers. Our combined gifts have the capacity to travel all over the world. Whether we are empowering young girls through education, or helping women learn a trade; rebuilding communities after disaster or supporting communities through agriculture as they learn to sustain themselves; in these and so many other ways, we are privileged to join God at work. When we invest in the futures of others, God turns our investments into life-giving water for growing seeds.

The One Great Hour of Sharing offering is the American Baptist response to worldwide disaster relief and development. One Great Hour of Sharing, in cooperation with other denominations, is a channel for national and international aid in times of crisis. Our goal this year is \$200.

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Work It Out

Zoom Exercise Classes from TriCounty Active Adult Center

Missing your weekly workouts? [Click here for details about the classes TriCounty Active Adult Center is offering through Zoom!](#)

MONDAY: SilverSneakers Classic with Liz 11:30-12:30
Meeting ID: 892 4379 6205
Password: 798781

TUESDAY: CardioDance with Liz 11:30-12:30
Meeting ID: 754 7566 1701
Password: 6Tq0Fr

TUESDAY: Chair Yoga with Liz 1:00-2:00
Meeting ID: 798 2840 3353
Password: 3tNa8R

WEDNESDAY: Total Body Workout with Jolene 10:00-11:00
Meeting ID: 893 0174 0794
Password: 063510

THURSDAY: PiYo with Jolene 9:00-10:00
Meeting ID: 889 8207 6117
Password: 341509

FRIDAY: Boom Move Dance Party with Jolene 10:00-11:00
Meeting ID: 870 1021 9687
Password: 305324

Zoom Exercise Classes at Boyertown Area Multi-Service

The Center at Spring Street, Boyertown Area Multi-Service is also offering exercise classes on Zoom. The Center asks that if you find you like the classes and wish to continue, you contact The Center at 610-367-2313 and request that they mail you a NAT-E form for Berks County. A completed and returned form is all you need to do to become a Center member. There is no fee for membership and a completed form helps with future funding.

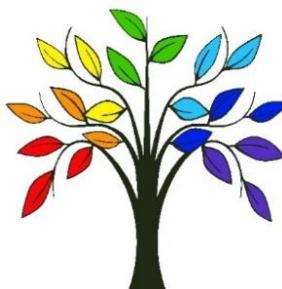
TUESDAY EVENING: Yoga w/Fran @ 6:00
Meeting ID-951 9019 9130

WEDNESDAY: Move and Groove @ 9:15
Meeting ID-966 8939 2907

WEDNESDAY: Chair Yoga @ 10:15
Meeting ID-997 8132 8157

FRIDAY: Yoga w/Fran @ 9:00
Meeting ID-980 0475 7605

FRIDAY: Dance w/Fran @ 10:30
Meeting ID-969 3651 7556



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