



Visions May 2020

Instead of Watching Netflix...



There is a lot happening at FBC behind the face masks! We may not be in the building, but ministry continues and envisioning for the future goes on. I thought it was important for you to know everything that's in the works as we enter May and so I hope you will read through our newsletter this month to find out exactly what we are doing, when we're not watching Netflix or Amazon Prime. (Not that I *really* watch either very often! I miss baseball!)

Pastor Marcia

Creating New Opportunities to Worship and Gather



In just a matter of days, we went from life as usual to a new way of interacting, connecting and doing ministry! Thank you for your patience and the enthusiasm with which you have embraced the changes. We are still figuring out what is most effective to meet our needs for both a time to deepen the expression of our spirituality together

(worship and learning) and to gather just to be together (hanging out and sharing). In addition, we have been having meetings via Zoom.

Worship will continue at 10:30am on Sundays via Zoom. Invite your friends! Just send them to fbcpottstown.org, and they can click the link to get on! We usually come online around 10:15am so you can get on and get yourself "settled" and ready for worship. You can also say "hello" to others! Each week we will be doing things a little differently as we explore what we can do together using this technology.

Worship, May 3rd: A Conversation and Communion

I am pleased to welcome **Mr. Aziz Nathoo** as our worship guest on Sunday, May 3rd. I have known Aziz for several years and have been a guest in the home he shares with his marriage partner, Ghazala; Ghazala and I are a part of an interfaith group of Muslims, Christians and Jews called Daughters of Abraham.

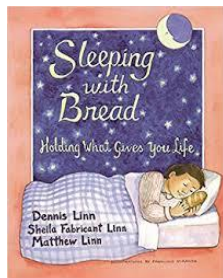
Aziz Nathoo is a Muslim Interfaith and Peace preacher hailing from East Africa. **He works in reducing misinformation about Islam through respectful dialogue and promoting interfaith understanding and tolerance.** He has presented at various houses of worship and universities as well as the Dialogue Institute and United Nations on replacing ignorance with wisdom protecting the rights of the most vulnerable. He is the president of UMMA Charities and works with Amnesty International, Poor Peoples Campaign, AJC, Brahma Kumaris and the Aga Khan Foundation as well as various refugee relief agencies.

Aziz has chaired a series of conferences titled "Healing the Soul of the Nation" and is chairing an upcoming conference titled "Giving & Forgiving" at Chestnut Hill College in October 2020. His **philosophy is to "Converse not Convert" in conducting dialogue.** He is a consultant and businessman by profession.



Worship with us as we talk with Aziz and as we share communion with one another (Aziz will not participate in communion because he will be fasting for Ramadan.) **Please prepare simple elements of bread and cup to use as communion on that day.**

**Sleeping with Bread –
A New Learning Community
Opportunity Starting at
7pm on May 5th via Zoom**



For many of us this time of pandemic is also a time of stress. We may wonder how we can keep our equilibrium--and keep our faith--in the midst of threat and uncertainty.

Tuesday, May 5th, we will begin a new, short-term, adult Learning Community opportunity based on "Sleeping with Bread: Holding What Gives You Life" by Sheila, Matthew, and Dennis Linn. Our goal is to learn some spiritual techniques that help us hold our lives in balance while acknowledging both the good and bad we experience.

Deb Brauner and Dennis Landon will lead the (probably) four sessions, starting Tuesday, May 5th, at 7:00pm via Zoom. We are planning four sessions of one hour each.

Interested in participating? Let Deb (debrauner@comcast.net) or Dennis (dlandon@fastmail.fm) know or email the church office at office@fbcpottstown.org. (It will help us prepare if we know how many will be participating.)

When It Rains, It Pours!

In the last week of April, the storms that hit Pottstown left an unpleasant surprise for our FBC family. The rubber top of the roof on our Education Building was torn and peeled back. The torrential rain then began pouring in. The classrooms on the

third floor used by the YWCA were damaged extensively. Although the water also got into the north stairwell, the second floor was not damaged.



Nancy and Rick Unruh were alerted to the situation by a YWCA teacher who had stopped by to get materials from the classroom. Nancy and Rick immediately alerted Pastor Marcia, the Moderators, and the Trustees. They contacted our insurance company and arranged for a roofer to provide a temporary fix. Nancy and Rick began the clean-up and supervised a clean-up company hired to dry the water and remove the water-damaged materials from the ceiling and walls.

Nancy also coordinated with the YWCA to help them handle the damages to the materials inside each classroom. Rick worked with the insurance adjuster to inspect the damage both inside and on the roof, and their son Scott helped them continue cleaning.



While in the midst of all of this work, Rick and Nancy also dealt with the sudden fire alarm caused by damage to the alarm system. Nancy made arrangements for the alarm company to come and fix the damage to that system as well.

Our gratitude for all that you have done, Nancy and Rick! Your quick response to this emergency is very much appreciated.



Meet Our New Communications and Technology Interns!

The Ministry Coordination Team is excited to extend a learning opportunity to Samuel Lorient¹ and Thomas Bailey² during this interesting season. They are currently negotiating with FBC to be our short term, unpaid interns. Sam has a BS in Computer Science and a Master of Arts in Religion. Thomas has a BA in Communications. They will be working with our congregation as we make the shift from in-person gathering to online meeting and ministry, helping us maximize our message and our outreach. A small committee will be working with them to envision the project and will oversee their efforts. And all of you will get to see/hear from them at some point as they help us articulate our vision for who and what God is calling us to be. (And yes, if you are wondering, Thomas is Marcia's youngest son and Sam is the son of Dr. Stephanie Sauvé, the preacher at Marcia's installation service.) Sam and Thomas have known each other for years and are excited to work together with us! Look for them one of these Sundays on Zoom!



1 Sam Lorient



2 Thomas Bailey

Taking Nothing for *GRANTED*

Since January we have applied for two grants and one loan; here are the details:

In late January, Mike Heinz led the way as we applied for a **PA Non-Profit Security Grant**. The grant offers resources “to nonprofit organizations who primarily serve individuals, groups, or institutions that are included within a bias motivation category for single bias hate crime

incidents as defined by the FBI's 2017 Hate Crime Statistics publication. Nonprofit organizations with a 501(c)(3) designation are eligible for funds to be used for security enhancements designed to protect the safety and security of the users of a facility located in the Commonwealth that is owned or operated by the nonprofit organization.” We requested \$25,000 for the following: modern security doors at the entrances to the building; improved exterior lighting; interior security cameras. FBC is eligible because our building houses the YWCA, CCLU and because we are Welcoming and Affirming. We are awaiting word on whether or not we will receive funds.

In February, Laura Alden led the way as we applied for a grant from the **Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation for \$5,000.00**. This grant would help us support additional ministries to our community though a number of programmatic ways, including but not limited to expanded relationships with those using our building. Although the pandemic has shifted some of the plans we had for this summer, we expect to hear about the grant in June.

In April, again led by Mike Heinz, FBC applied for the government loan made available in the **CARES ACT, the Paycheck Protection Program**. This is a forgivable loan which will allow us to continue to pay our employees during the pandemic in the face of loss of financial income. Although the first round of money ran out before our request could be funded, we applied again with the help of Thompkins bank. **FBC was able to successfully secure this PPP loan at the end of the month. The loan will allow FBC to continue to pay our staff through this crisis.**

Update on Finances at FBC

Our deepest thanks to all of those who have continued to support our ministry by keeping up their pledges and giving to FBC during the pandemic. We understand that finances are tight, but we celebrate all of you who have given; your



giving has allowed us to keep paying bills and our employees: Marcia, Kristi Pless and Nancy Unruh. Marcia and Kristi are primarily working from home and Nancy has been deep cleaning our church building and handling the roof emergency. While the building expenses for March reflected the use of heat, water and electricity for half the month, we expect our expenses to decrease because of the lack of activity in the building since March 15th.

We are grateful for those who have moved to online giving; this is the easiest and more direct way to ensure your gift gets to us regularly when we cannot gather to worship. Set up is easy and can accommodate your personal desires. Please check it out if you haven't already!

Here is the financial update for March that you would have seen in the bulletin:

Income: \$4,742
Income from Community Partners: \$5,000
Total Income: \$9,742
Expenses: \$13,388
Net Income for March: (\$3,646)

Finances and Our Building Partners....

Nancy went into the FBC building to clean and she met Chris Mouse, the *real* one! A little mouse was calmly enjoying Echo Hall, much to Nancy's surprise! That's because the building itself is as quiet as a mouse; the **YWCA** had to close down their programs on March 14th. **CCLU** also closed up that same week. **NA** met on March 16th in person but has gone online since then. CCLU had paid ahead for March and we received our monthly contribution from NA and the Y.

Because of the closing of the **Y's** program and the reduction of government funding that supports those programs, the **Y asked us to reduce their rent**. The Ministry Coordination Team negotiated with the Y, and they will be paying **half of their**

rent for April, May and June. In July, we need to agree to a new contract for their continued use. In addition, we have put our conversations about the Y purchasing the educational building on hold for now; we will resume conversation when we get past this current international emergency.

With the building empty, we have turned down the heat, are using less water and electricity, and are making weekly checks to make sure everything is alright. It's empty without all of you, but it will be ready to welcome you when we can return.

Ministry in Our Community

Face Masks for Our Neighbors

When we heard that wearing face masks were recommended, several of us began to sew. Over the last three weeks FBC and Friends have made and given out a total of 381 face masks. Thanks to Deb Bruner, Teri Hoffman, Laura's friends Wendy Fox & Jeanne Hutchinson, Ruth Chonka, and Thomas and Marcia Bailey. Our State Rep, Joe Ciresi, was able to supply some of the fabric we used to make the masks. With his help, 175 masks were given to Pottstown Hospital; the rest were distributed in the neighborhood of FBC. It was exciting to see how grateful people were to have this resource!



Giving with Our Neighbors through the Pottstown Ministerium

FBC participated with the Pottstown Ministerium in giving a combined total of \$2000.00 to Main Street Ministries. In addition, through the Ministerium a combined total of \$3500. Was donated to support the food distribution to



Pottstown Area School children and their families by the Foundation for Pottstown Education.

The Ricketts Center

Lydia Messinger, Executive Director of Boyertown Multiservices, which provides programming for the Ricketts Center reports that between March 6-April 10, 770 meals were provided to youth and families in a modified walk up format. (665 through the Archdiocese of Philadelphia + Wawa meals + 50 “family bags” of food and produce) We are so glad to be able to provide food for the whole family in addition to the youth meals. There are no residency requirements.

Traditionally, when the building was open, youth would receive meals after school through an amazing partnership with the Archdiocese of Philadelphia meal program. We are so grateful they offered to continue in this modified format.”

Pottstown Hospital

Before the pandemic, we had had a conversation with Pottstown Hospital about the possibility of them using our building as a community clinic. Since the current emergency, we have offered our space for any needs the hospital might have during this crisis; while they have expressed appreciation, they do not need to use our space and we have put further conversation about community clinics on hold for now.

In Our Wider World

May is our month to receive our **offering for God’s Precious Children**. This ministry to children in Liberia, founded by our friends Deborah and Gary Winters, provides education to children who would not otherwise be able to attend school. Our goal for this offering is \$200. There is a designated place to give online or you may mark your check’s memo line and send it to the office.

Reach Out to Each Other

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

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