

Visions • Sept/Oct 2020



Hope in the Midst of Trauma



As the United States reaches and passes the horrific milestone of 200,000 lives lost to Covid-19 and the pandemic moves into its seventh month, it is important that we pause and acknowledge the trauma with which we are living in these unprecedented days. It is true that many live with trauma every day: violent neighborhoods where gun shots are routine; unsafe living conditions and dangerous relationships keep people anxious and afraid. Watching the nightly news or recycling the hate fermented and repeated on social media sites all bring trauma into our lives on a daily basis; we are not new to assaults on our spirits.

But sharing this global suffering and threat does bring a new level of fear and uncertainty to living in these days. And the isolation required to keep the most people safe can be nearly as debilitating as the disease. Add to that heat, fire, flooding, endless “news” cycles, lack of clear national leadership, a Presidential election *and* the death of a Supreme Court Justice, and it can all be pretty overwhelming; I know I find myself struggling some days to maintain perspective and hope.

Which is why we need to acknowledge what is happening all around us; how it makes us feel, what it does to our minds and spirits. After a week without television, limited internet and no radio or newspapers, I found myself feeling

rather overwhelmed when I returned “to the world.” It felt loud and sad and angry and I longed for water and woods again.

Recognizing escape isn’t always an option, I did three things this week: I decided to limit my media intake to 30 minutes twice a day. I decided that I would prioritize my daily walks and exercise. I decided I would do something each day that would feel fun! Why? Because my spirit needs to feed on what gives life, not on what takes it. We cannot change much of what is happening around us, but each one of us *can* take control of what we take into our minds, hearts, bodies and spirits. When I give up mindless scrolling online, I have more time to do other, life-giving things. When I prioritize exercise and a daily walk, I give my body energy and my mind and spirit the blessing of fresh air and bright sunshine. When I plan and choose to value myself enough to do something that I enjoy: read a novel, work on a project, buy some flowers, watch a movie, I open my spirit to new energy and create more space for the renewing, healing presence of God to come in.

The writer of the Lamentations, after describing the horrible, debilitating state they find themselves in, says, “But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, [God’s] mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. “The LORD is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in [God].” (Lamentations 3: 21-24)

In worship last Sunday, we heard Bill Jackson play “Great is Thy Faithfulness” on the piano; it is a wonderful hymn that reminds us of this fact: that even in the midst of trauma and despair, God remains faithful, waiting to provide the comfort, compassion and hope we each need.

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In these days of uncertainty, be clear and certain about this: our God is still present to us, with us, among us. Our God will strengthen us and lead us to new, green pastures to rest and to “restore [our] souls.” Make space for your own self-care. Encourage the self-care of those you live with. Acknowledge the trauma of these days and then invite God to be present with you in it. And finally, be intentional about opening yourself to God’s healing care.

“Great is God’s faithfulness...therefore I will hope in God.”

Blessings,
Marcia

Working for Justice in Our Community



The FBC Anti-Racism Working Group is moving its ministry out into our community. On Friday September 18th, Jane Gruen, Joel Dugan, and Deb Brauner were outside the Ricketts Center helping people register to vote. On September 25th, the voter registration booth outside the Ricketts Center was run by Marcia Bailey, Myra Forrest, and Terry and Marvin Marsh, with support from people of Bethel Community Church.

The group also plans voter registration booths on September 26th in front of the FBC building and on September 29th in front of the Pottstown Cluster of Religious Communities, in partnership with Zion’s UCC.

Laura Alden and Barry Sawtelle also helped plan these activities, and Dennis Landon provided information and resources (forms, instructions, etc.) to support these efforts. Thank you, Dennis, for being available to answer questions and troubleshoot for all the volunteers.

If you would like to get involved, opportunities are coming up. The group will meet again on October 13th at 7pm on Zoom, and the link will be posted on the FBC website.

Our Little Free Libraries are Crafty This Month!

Our Little Free Libraries are crafty this month with craft kits for children to pick up. Jeanne Petrosky, Nancy Unruh, Deb Brauner, and Kathy Purington used resources from the Christian Education closet as well as donations to put together the craft kits. The kits are in a bin next to the Little Free Libraries for kids to pick up while they last.

If you would like to sign up to be a steward for our libraries one month, reach out to Marcia or Jane Gruen!

Partnering with the YWCA for Students in Pottstown



FBC partnered with the YWCA this month to provide school kits for 80 Pottstown children who will be learning from home this fall. We have decided to save you the trouble of shopping and did it for you; you can support this effort by giving a donation marked “School supplies” to offset the cost. You can mail a check to the church or give online through our website.

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FBC Church Office Hours



Kristi will be in the FBC office on **Wednesdays from 10am to 12pm** starting in September. Phone messages will be checked each week during this time, but Kristi can still receive emails all week long!

If you need to stop by the FBC office during office hours, please call 610-326-2273 before you visit. Remember to practice social distancing and wear your mask!

Let's Connect with Bill & Nancy Webster!



I had the honor of interviewing our new members, Bill and Nancy Webster. Let's learn more about them!

Q. Bill and Nancy welcome to FBC! Can you tell us what brought you to our congregation?

A. We moved from Alabama primarily to be near our daughter Jennifer who is battling pancreatic cancer. We also have

another daughter as well as grandchildren and great grandchildren in the area.

We checked out FBC online and then visited because the music program seemed interesting. We have always been Baptists, so it seemed a reasonable choice based on your website. Then Bill recognized Marica as the pastor who visited his brother when he was ill and eventually died from heart failure. Bill had been there for several of Marcia's visits and was impressed by the care that she offered. So, we knew from the start that this would probably be the church for us.

Q. More basically...where are you from? How did you meet? Who is your family?

A. Nancy is from Laurel, Maryland, and Bill is from the world! He lived in Pennsylvania, Florida, back to Pennsylvania and eventually Alabama. We met at Eastern University (then Eastern Baptist College).

We have 3 daughters, 4 grandchildren, and 4 great grandchildren. We lost one son as an infant.

Q. Tell us what you are passionate about. What energizes you?

A. Passion is a difficult question as we find our way through the pandemic. We moved just as the restrictions started, and here we are in a new place. Family is here, but no friends, no doctors (and we need both of those). So, making a new path is very difficult, but it is extremely important to us.

Right now, our primary passion is to be supportive of Jenny during her struggle with cancer. Our other passion now is to interact with our great grandchildren as they grow up.

We are energized by the church's emphasis on justice. That seems right to us at this time, and it is very important to us. We look forward to finding ways that we can be more participative.

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Q. What else would you like us to know?

A. Bill almost became a minister! He spent 2 years at Crozer Seminary. He instead worked as a research leader at Corson Lime in Plymouth Meeting and eventually invented processes that led to the formation of IU Conversion Systems, and then Envirote Field Services where he was president and eventually followed that company to Alabama.

Nancy has always been active in music groups, including Sweet Adelines and church choirs. She is a social person and likes reading groups.

We both have participated in various aspects of hospice volunteering. Bill wrote a book of meditations for patients and caregivers going through life-threatening illnesses and he served as volunteer chapel at a local hospital.

We have both been leaders in our previous churches, serving on various committees.

We look forward to being part of the fellowship here!

Thank you, Nancy and Bill! We are so glad to have you as part of our church family and look forward to forming friendships with you both! Our prayers are with you and Jenny as well as you go through this difficult time. Please know that we as a congregation are here to be a support to you all.

Jane Gruen
Community Care and Connection Board

Learning Community Opportunities

A congregation has the responsibility to help participants prepare to be ministers of Christ in the world. FBC's Board of Spiritual Formation will be offering multiple opportunities for our growth in: Biblical knowledge, theological understanding and community issues.

The first two offerings are coming up in October:

Book Study facilitated by Deb Brauner – Monday evenings at 7:00 PM on Zoom

In eight sessions, beginning Monday, October 5th, we will explore together Miroslav Volf's book titled, ***A Public Faith: How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good***. Volf explores the question, "How can followers of Christ use the resources of their faith to advocate for public good in a pluralistic society?" Volf is a Croatian Protestant theologian and Henry B. Wright Professor of Theology and Director of the Yale Center for Faith and Culture at Yale University. If you would like to hear from Volf himself, the author has many YouTube videos including three clips outlining ***A Public Faith***. Participants may purchase their own books on Amazon or through other booksellers. Prices on Amazon range from \$2.99-\$4.97; Kindle version - \$9.99. Please register through the church office no later than Sunday, October 4th. We would like to have a minimum of five participants to offer this book study.

Living in God's Kingdom Now – Bible Study with Joel Dugan (Day & Time TBD)

Every week we pray, "Your kingdom come." But what are we really praying for? What is God's kingdom all about? For the next 6 or 7 weeks, we will seek to gain an understanding of what it means to be citizens of God's kingdom. We will look at our responsibilities for living both in the here and now and in the not yet. In light of the current circumstances in which our country is embroiled, our focus will be on justice in God's kingdom and our role in bringing it about.

Please **call or email the church office by Sunday, October 4th** if you're interested in one or both of these learning opportunities.

The Board of Spiritual is also planning a learning group on public school funding issues later this Fall.

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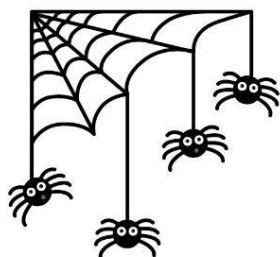


The Roof Over Our Heads

Exterior – Muthard Roofing has completed the repairs to the flat rubber roof on the Education Building, and the final cost of \$56,449 was paid this month.

The masonry repairs to the outside steps on King St have been completed, and the faucets in the courtyard and in the custodial closet have been repaired.

Interior – Rick Unruh continues to seek estimates for repairs to the damage in the upstairs classroom in the Education Building. Repairs should begin soon.



Reaching Out Through the Web

The new Board of Technology and Communication has begun efforts to extend FBC's ministry electronically. Information (posts) are added to our FBC Facebook page each week, and you can give it a boost!

All you need to do is **Share** an FBC post to your Facebook page, and the number of people who see FBC's information goes from ~20 to over 200! When just 6-8 people share a post, FBC's information is shown to upwards of 500 people. A moment of your time can really help us reach out.

Did you know that FBC has an Instagram page? Just look for [@firstbaptistchurchpottstown](https://www.instagram.com/firstbaptistchurchpottstown) and follow our page. We'll follow back!

The Board purchased a computer for our Administrative Assistant to use for church business while she is working from home.

The Board is also investigating ways to allow our choir to sing together virtually as well as ways to use technology to support our live, online worship.

Mission Opportunities

Our offering in September has been for Church World Service: **Blankets & Tools**. We've set a goal of \$250 this year.

During the crisis, faith guides a loving response. That is how the CWS Blanket program started, and that's why your gifts mean so much this year. Through the generosity of congregations like ours and other CWS partners, vulnerable neighbors can keep warm with fresh linens and clean sleeping quarters.

In 2019, CSW Tools program distributed thousands of materials around the world to neighbors who are trying to rebuild their lives. But they need our help building on this work in 2020. Support CWS Tools to reach out to families fleeing their homes, recovering from disaster, and more.

In October, we will receive our **American Baptist World Mission Offering**. Through your gifts to WMO, you can put food on an empty table, foster literacy in a community, bring water and electricity to a village without them, and support the work of ABCUSA missionaries around the globe!

Just think: \$25 would buy seeds for a small family garden for two households in Mexico. \$50 could pay for lunches for 20 students for a month in Panama or cover the cost of supplies for a women's Bible study in Mexico. \$100 could cover the cost of a literary program for 20 adults for three months, and \$250 could pay for theological and leadership training for 20 new pastors.

Last year FBC gave \$140 to WMO. This year we can give more! **Our goal is \$250 or more!**

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You can give online at our website or by check marked for WMO. Give today!

FBC Financial Update!

The Amazing Raise



Once again, we will participate in the Amazing Raise, organized by the TriCounty Network, as a way for our church to raise money by simply giving what we usually give, or more! Every dollar we collect in the month of October that is marked for "The Amazing Raise" will be considered "raised money" that we can report to TriCounty in order to receive additional monies, based on what we bring in.

How do you participate? Mark any check for October (that's not WMO!) for Amazing Raise, even if it is your normal giving, and we can count it. [Go on the Amazing Raise website at www.amazingraisetricounty.org](http://www.amazingraisetricounty.org), type in the name of our church, and give there.

Consider giving your November or even November and December gifts in October and our contribution will grow even more! This is an easy way for us to "grow" some money; **whatever we raise in October earmarked "Amazing Raise" stays with us, but it is credited to our fundraising for this event.**

Our thanks to all who have been continuing to support the life and ministry of FBC. Even while we are not together physically, we have continued to come together in other ways to do the work of ministry in our neighborhood and in the world. Your gifts make this happen!

The paperwork to apply for forgiveness of the Payroll Protection Program Loan has been submitted. Thank you, Mike Heinz, for tackling that confusing process. We will let everyone know as soon as we have an answer on the forgiveness application.

Offering Income in August	\$ 4,119.04
Rental Income in August	\$ 7,530.00
Other Income in August	\$ 0.00
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Total income in August	\$11,649.04

Expenses in August \$ 6,777.15



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