



Stockbridge Presbyterian Church
4740 N. Henry Blvd., Stockbridge, GA 30281
770-474-7777

Rev. Betsy Turner, Interim Pastor

The Church At The Bridge

Friends,

The other day in one of my clergy Zoom meetings, a colleague asked an important question: "What is God teaching us right now?"

Now, let me be clear, neither this colleague nor I believe that God has caused this virus in order to teach us a lesson. We do not believe that the God of goodness and life and love is ever the cause pain and suffering. What we believe is that God walks alongside us with compassion and love, and works and speaks to us in the midst of whatever our situation.

So, I've been pondering that question: what is God teaching us right now?

One thing we are learning is that the church is actually much more adaptable than we thought. The church in general has a well-earned reputation of being resistant to change, and clinging to "the way we've always done it." But necessity being the mother of invention, we've quickly changed to worship via website or Facebook, fellowship and meetings via Zoom, and pastoral care from afar by call, text, email, and notes. It's not perfect, especially for our folks without internet at home, but we have found workarounds for that as well (you can join the Zoom fellowship AND listen to worship on a regular phone – if you're not sure how, please call me or the church office and we will help you!). We certainly didn't want to have to learn these lessons, especially for this reason, a pandemic. But what a wonderful discovery, that change can be quicker and less painful than the church once imagined. God is teaching us to be flexible and open to new things and to think about new ways of being a church, thanks be!

Another thing we are learning because of this virus is our connectedness. Our health and safety, along with our mortality, are deeply tied up with our neighbors because this virus passes person to person. We all need to wear masks when going out because we are literally breathing the same air. We miss in-person gatherings and grieve our isolation, precisely because we thrive on community. We are intentionally staying apart and staying home because we know that sharing space is dangerous to all of us right now and the risk is too great. Yet, even with all this realization of our connectedness, we are still seeing the ways we are disconnected, our deep brokenness as a community and human family: this virus disproportionately affecting people of color because of the deep inequalities in our systems, senseless acts of violence spurred by racism, and political divisions about how to deal with this virus, which should actually be a simple fact-based medical and scientific issue we can all agree on and work on together. God teaching us something about the common good, connectedness, and all the ways we belong to and are responsible for each other – again, thanks be!

Some of you have already shared what God is teaching you, and what you are learning in this time – but if you'd like to share something, I'd love to hear from any of you. I am thankful for each one of you, and the privilege of serving as your pastor,

even in this most unusual of times. I hope that you are continuing to stay in, stay in touch, and stay generous while we are apart.

Peace,
Betsy



Your PNC continues to work on searching for our next pastor. We are meeting by Zoom, and it has worked well for our team. We appreciate the continued support and prayers of the congregation.

CORONAVIRUS
(COVID-19) AND THE CHURCH

Session has unanimously decided that we will not gather for church activities at least through the month of June. Session has also appointed a Reimagining Task Force made up of Jeffrey Cochran, Gene Ingram, Stephanie Phillips-Ayoola, Jack Shedd, and Betsy Sierra to research Covid-19 protocols. This task force will make recommendations to the Session as we continue to discern together what is safest and best for the congregation.



We need to let you, the congregation, know, about 2 important things related to the finances of the church. First the bad news – our giving in April was roughly HALF of what we would expect to cover our expenses. That shortfall is serious, and not sustainable – at that rate,

the Session will have to make some hard decisions soon. We know this is a tough time for many folks, but if you are able, please give to SPC. If you have reduced expenses (such as spending less on gas and eating out) or increased income (from the federal stimulus or otherwise), please consider "paying it forward" and directing some of that toward the church. Our mission and ministry depend on you. You can mail checks to the church, arrange with Linda Hodges to deliver a donation to the office, or use our online giving portal spcusa.org/online-giving.

Second, the good news – we are deeply grateful to have received a Payroll Protection Program loan through the Small Business Administration. This one-time, forgivable loan is not a long-term solution, but it will help offset some of our recent shortfall, by assisting with payroll expenses for a couple of months. Many thanks to Linda Hodges, Jim Beisner, and Kim Seal for their diligent work, through many rounds and layers of complex applications, to make this possible. We are thankful for this assistance during these unusual times, and we continue to rely on your generosity to sustain our congregation.

Session Report

Special Meeting - April 12, 2020

Rev. Turner stated the reason for the meeting was to address issues that affect Stockbridge Presbyterian Church caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

New Business

Gathering for worship – The Session approved cancelling all activities in the church facilities from 5/1/2020 until 5/11/2020.

The Session approved applying for a loan through the Payroll Protection Program to be used for staff salaries and benefits and utility costs until 6/30/2020. The loan can be forgiven if SPC maintains current employee count through 6/30/2020.

The Session approved extending Rev. Turner's contract at the same terms for an additional 6 months from 5/20/2020 to 11/19/2020.

Session business – The Session decided to have a called meeting via video conference on Sunday 4/26/2020 at 3:00 pm to discuss additional actions as dictated by the situation concerning coronavirus.

The reason for the meeting having been accomplished, Rev. Betsy Turner closed the meeting with prayer.

Special Meeting - April 26, 2020

Rev. Turner stated the reason for the meeting was to address issues that affect Stockbridge Presbyterian Church caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

New Business

Gathering for worship – The Session approved cancelling all activities in the church facilities from 5/11/2020 until 6/1/2020.

Jim provided an update on application for a loan through the Paycheck Protection Program. The program funds were depleted when Ameris Bank applied for the loan. There will be a second attempt to apply for funds with the release of additional money by the federal government.

Betsy led a discussion on the church's digital presence moving into phase in of activities and the future. The Discipleship Committee will investigate technology and maintenance requirements for digital presentations to the membership and friends.

The Session approved reimbursing Rev. Turner for the cost of access to the Zoom meeting application for as long as the meetings are required. Cost not to exceed \$20.00 per month. Kim will create a line item to budget this cost.

Session business – The Session decided to have a called meeting via video conference on Sunday 5/17/2020 at 3:00 pm to discuss additional actions as dictated by the situation concerning coronavirus.

The reason for the meeting having been accomplished, Rev. Betsy Turner closed the meeting with prayer.

Happy Birthday!

Jun 1	John Wells
Jun 5	Danny Sierra
Jun 6	Mary Carol Stanley
Jun 8	Thelma Newsome
Jun 13	Carly Keller
Jun 14	Isabella Newsome
Jun 15	Dorothy Clark
Jun 19	Breana Huggins

Women's Bible Study

Our Women's Bible Study continues every Thursday morning using conference calling. If you would like to join in, please contact Betsy Turner or the church office for the dial-in information.

a word from ... Ward

Hello, dear friends. We miss you all very much. The Wednesday night Zoom is quite helpful, but we miss the hugs. I want you to know that when we do resume physically, music will be different, because the scientists tell us that singing spreads particles and aerosols over surprising distances. I look at this as a challenge. I am looking forward to the task force's results, and I have faith in these folks. But it will be different. I foresee the use of more instruments. Let's face it, handbells don't emit aerosolized particles, so that's an idea. We will need to explore what can be done safely. We can adapt, and I will be ready to work with anyone who wants to do this - from a safe distance, of course. Take heart. God is still in control.



We continue to be so thankful for your tithes and offerings during this time. There are several ways to continue your giving, even when we are not meeting in the church building.

- ◆ On-line giving. Click the Give Now link below and then follow the steps.



- ◆ If you have bill pay set up through your bank, you can add Stockbridge Presbyterian as a vendor/organization. Usually, there are options to send a one time payment, or even to set up recurring automatic payments.
- ◆ Mail your check directly to the church.

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THE SPC SESSION
Jim Beisner, Clerk of Session

Discipleship	Witness
Aaron Roberts (20)	Stephanie Phillips Ayoola (20)
Paul Szeto (21)	Arlene Lathrop (22)
Terry Holmes (21)	Lee Hart (22)

Resources
Gene Ingram (21)
Kim Seal (20)

SPC SPOTLIGHT