



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

Rev. Betsy Turner, Interim Pastor

The Church At The Bridge

SPC Friends,

I have never been a runner. In fact, the only time I run is if something is chasing me. But I've been thinking about the metaphor of running a race a lot lately.

When things shut down back in March, we all assumed it would be a sprint, an intense few weeks, and then things would be back to "normal." I've told many of you that, I first only brought home a purple stole for Lent, then later the white stole for Easter season... and it was many weeks before I was ready to reluctantly admit that I would also need the red stole for Pentecost, and a green stole for ordinary time.

Of course, this time is anything but ordinary. As the pandemic continued, many realized "this is a marathon, not a sprint." An apt metaphor! Runners will tell you a marathon is totally different from a shorter race. You have to prepare and move your body and manage your breath and energy in very different ways than for a shorter run. As this Covid season turned from weeks into months, I had to learn to pace myself. Sprinting is exhausting and not sustainable over the long haul, so I've had to intentionally adjust my stance and manage my breath and energy in new ways. I wonder if some of you have felt the same way?

Recently, I've changed to a new running metaphor. This isn't a sprint or a marathon – it's a relay race! A relay race is all about sharing the distance and the effort, and keeping connected. It depends on all the players giving their best effort, but also tending to when and how to hand off the baton. In recent weeks, I'm realizing that I cannot – and we cannot – power through this alone, on our own individual strength and energy. We have to share the race and share the load, passing the baton back and forth. I am reminded of the saying, "if you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together."

This newsletter is full of examples of how we are passing that baton around, trying to keep those connections with God, each other, and our community. Our committees are fully in the race, with many plans in the works to keep us connected – connecting with our kids, gathering adult Sunday school, continuing the PNC and Task Force work, and starting an important conversation about race. I hope YOU will grab the baton in your own way, as we continue to be church together!

I'm so thankful for each member of the "relay team" – every one of you! And that the Holy Spirit is the anchor of our team, pulling us together, cheering us on, and giving us wisdom and strength as we "run with perseverance the race that is set before us." (Hebrews 12:1).

Stay in, stay in touch, and stay generous,
 Betsy



Pen Pals / prayer partners for our kids! We are looking to match our young children with an adult pen pal in the church. No special skills needed, just a willingness to write to one of our kids about once a week. Please call (678-642-9810) or email (StockbridgeInterim@gmail.com) Betsy Turner if you are willing, and she will match you with one of our fantastic kiddos!

a word from... **Ward**

As is normal, the affable secretary, Linda Hodges, recently sent me the perfunctory reminder for the monthly newsletter article. I responded in writing that I really didn't have anything else to say. She was very kind and understanding. Then, this morning, I called her and related in person my feelings. She offered excellent consolation. Ironically, I said, maybe I can say something after all, a la Seinfeld, the sitcom which is essentially about absolutely nothing. My son a good while back said, "Dad, it's either about nothing or about everything!" I think he is correct. He often offers me good counsel.

So this is how I feel. I miss my 92 year old mom, my son, Jonathan, my DIL, Melissa, and those adorable twins, James and Evelyn. I miss SPC. It's not the building, it's you, and the fellowship. Believe it or not, I can manage for a spell without singing. We can do something else musically. But, as humans, we need community and we need to be patient. History has told us that these things do not last forever. Thanks be to God.

In the meantime, feel free to call or write me if I can help.

Devotedly,
 Ward

Mission-From-Home

Piedmont Henry Hospital has asked the community to send notes and cards of encouragement for their employees, who are working so tirelessly and selflessly during this time of Covid-19. You can drop your cards in person inside the hospital's education building, or just mail them to:

**Community Relations Department
 Piedmont Henry Hospital
 1133 Eagles Landing Parkway
 Stockbridge, GA 30281**

Please have your notes in by August 15. They hope to gather enough to give a note to every single one of the 1800+ of their employees, as an expression of community support!



The deep issue of racism has once again come to the forefront of our national consciousness in recent weeks, and some of you have been wondering how to engage this issue thoughtfully and faithfully. One good place to start is by listening and learning together. To that end, we are offering a pair of initial sessions on Zoom during August:

- Week 1: Thursday, August 13 at 7:30pm / Sunday, August 16 at 3:00pm
- Week 2: Thursday, August 27 at 7:30pm / Sunday, August 30 at 3:00pm

For each week, Betsy will send out "homework" beforehand (an article to read, a podcast to listen to, or the like), which will be the starting place for our conversations. You pick between Thursday and Sunday. These first meetings will give us a chance to see who is interested, and decide together how to keep the conversation going. If you are interested, please email Betsy Turner (StockbridgeInterim@gmail.com), and please indicate whether you would like to attend on Thursday evening or Sunday afternoon.

Session Report

Special Meeting - June 7, 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

Kim discussed the financial condition of the church through the month of May 2020. Expenses again exceeded gifts for May. The church did receive the Paycheck Protection Program funds in May. Kim stated that giving in the first week of June exceeded \$7,000.

Jim provided an update on the loan forgiveness application for the Paycheck Protection Program. Ameris Bank is developing an on-line application that will speed up the loan forgiveness process. There are changes to the process based on legislation being processed through Congress.

Gathering for worship – Gene and Stephanie presented a reopening plan developed by the Reimagining Task Force. The Session approved the plan as presented. Betsy will draft a letter to the congregation explaining how the Session is approaching reopening the church facilities.

Aaron reported on the church's digital presence moving into phase in of activities and the future. He has identified equipment required to record worship in the sanctuary. The next step is understanding how the equipment and app works to put together a broadcast.

Betsy lead a discussion on how communion should be handled. The Session decided to take some time to discern whether virtual communion should take place and how it could be done. The discussion will continue at the next called meeting.

A discussion on other actions and planning the Session needs to address that are outside of the Reimagining TF scope. Aaron will check with Laura Richardson and Betsy will check with Jeffrey Cochran to discuss the feasibility of holding virtual Sunday school and report back to the Session at the next called meeting.

Session Business – The Session decided to have a called meeting via video conference on Sunday 6/7/2020 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 - June 28, 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

Kim discussed the financial condition of the church through the month of May 2020. Expenses again exceeded gifts for May. The church did receive the Paycheck Protection Program funds in May. Kim updated the Session on June revenue of \$11,033 through 6/20/2020.

Jim provided an update on the loan forgiveness application for the Paycheck Protection Program. Ameris Bank is developing an on-line application that will speed up the loan forgiveness process which has not yet been published.

Betsy lead a discussion on looking into communication options for the church due to long distance expenses of one of the women's Bible study members as the conference call is located out of state. She determined that conducting a 3-way phone call will take care of the situation for the church member.

Gathering for worship –Stephanie presented an update on the Reimagining Task Force activities. The Task Force has not met since the last Session meeting. Gene did prepare a draft re-opening procedures document that lays out tasks needing to be accomplished once the church is opened. The Task Force will focus on this document to determine logistic requirements. The Session approved cancelling all activities in the church facilities from 7/1/2020 until 9/1/2020. Betsy will send a congregation wide email explaining this decision and the rationale used to come to consensus. The Session will contact their under-shepherd lists to also convey this decision and query ideas on ways the congregation can stay connected.

Kim provided an update on the PNC's progress in finding our next full-time pastor. The PNC is not meeting from 6/14/2020 to 7/13/2020. They are still reviewing candidate PIF's during this time off.

Aaron reported on the church's digital presence moving into phase in of activities and the future. He has purchased an iPhone attachment for a tripod, but has not checked on the phone editing app. The Discipleship Committee will meet to pursue the technology needs.

Betsy lead a discussion on education opportunities while we remotely meet. Stephanie volunteered to investigate starting a Saturday morning coffee/book Zoom gathering. Discipleship Committee will explore additional opportunities in education and Witness Committee will explore more fellowship opportunities.

Session Business – The Session decided to have a called meeting via video conference on Sunday 7/19/2020 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.



Your Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) is continuing to search for SPC's next pastor, despite the challenges of Covid-19. We meet regularly (by Zoom) to seek the person

God is calling to SPC. We have been blessed with many applicants to consider. We appreciate your prayers of support as we discern together during this strange time. If you have questions about the search process, please feel free to ask any of the members of the PNC: Annetta Harper, Terry Holmes, Aaron Roberts, Kim Seal, and Paul Szeto.



As you know, SPC will not have any in-person gatherings at least through August. While our state is still experiencing "uncontrolled

community spread," the risk of gathering, even with stringent protocols, is simply too great. We are not alone in this – most of the churches in our Presbytery are also not gathering in person at this time.

The Reimagining Task Force is closely monitoring the pandemic alongside our phased plan. They meet regularly (remotely!) and are working hard to figure out what will need to happen when we do gather, such as limited attendance, required masks, spaced seating, screening and tracing those who participate, and protections for staff and volunteers.

We all miss each other and pray for control of the coronavirus, so we can get back together in person. For now, the best thing you can do to help us move toward gathering is to follow public health guidelines: avoiding outings and gatherings, and when you must go out, practicing diligent hygiene, physical distancing, and mask-wearing.



Sunday School will begin again in August! We won't be meeting in person, and it might not always be on a Sunday, but we will be together again and sharing God's word. The finer points are being ironed out and an invitation for a Zoom meeting will be sent ASAP. Please contact Aaron Roberts at 678-859-2767 or the church office if you need more details. Continue to be safe and wear your masks!

THE SPC SESSION

Jim Beisner, Clerk of Session

Discipleship

- Aaron Roberts (20)
- Paul Szeto (21)
- Terry Holmes (21)

Witness

- Stephanie Phillips Ayoola (20)
- Arlene Lathrop (22)
- Lee Hart (22)

Resources

- Gene Ingram (21)
- Kim Seal (20)