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FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, MISSION, TEXAS

The epic movie, "the Longest Day," is set on June 6, 1944, D-Day. War time is a different time, normal life is set aside for war, even in the home front, the lives of civilians is different, with rationing, and war support endeavors.

Soldiers are trained to fight in war. Everything is planned carefully; transportation and strategic movements as each side seeks an advantage.

On D-Day, some soldiers arrive by ship on carefully selected beaches at Normandy, while others arrive by plane, parachuting down in carefully selected landing zones behind the beaches.

For whatever reason, some of the paratroopers were dropped in the wrong landing zone... in swampland rather than dry fields... materials were lost and the forces were scattered... this wasn't planned... but the troops adapted, regrouped and moved to their objectives from whatever circumstances they found themselves in.

In the middle of March, 2020, we found ourselves in a war against COVID-19. A pandemic had descended upon us, and familiar life, familiar ways, and familiar activities were no longer possible. We all had to take account of our new surroundings, adapt, regroup and attempt to live as well as we could in strange times. Social Distancing was a new word in our vocabulary.

In the church, we found ourselves in an unfamiliar landing zone. The state ban on indoor gatherings meant that we had to find a way to worship, study and fellowship in new ways, using technology, the internet resources of YouTube and Facebook, to live-stream and make recorded worship available. Meetings, Fellowship and Study were possible via Zoom internet conferencing. It wasn't the same as being together in person, but these new ways of gathering online allowed us to do something, rather than nothing.

The Pandemic caught us in the middle of a process known as "Vital Congregations," in which we analyzed everything we were doing, evaluated it, and made plans for being as Vital as possible in the present and future to our congregation and our geographic neighbors. This process was put on hold as we scrambled to adapt to the situation in which we found ourselves.

In March, 2020, we assumed that the Pandemic would end in a matter of weeks or months, but it droned on and on. This summer, it looked like it was about over, when the Delta Variant increased our area cases 10-fold from 400 to over 4,000. At this time,

PASTOR CORNER CONTINUED

the Delta Variant surge is waning, but we don't know if the Pandemic will last six more months or a year or two more, so, the session is determined to make plans to do as much as possible during the Pandemic while we make longer term plans for whenever the pandemic is over.

Among other things, this newsletter will address by committee, Admin, Nurture, Service and Worship; where we have been during the Pandemic, where we are today, what we plan for the near future, and what we hope for in the longer term to be as Vital a congregation as we can for our members and our neighbors.

As for the pastor, I am retiring at the end of this year, and am working on helping the session plan for what it needs to do to prepare for its near term and long term mission. In Christ, Eric



Service Committee

During the Pandemic, our Service Committee has remained faithful in helping our neighbors in need, primarily through the Mission Food Pantry. We continued to collect food for the Pantry, and participated in the Farm to Home program providing lots of fresh food (many pallets) to help feed the hungry in Mission.

We have continued to collect coins (noisy offering) to have a global outreach through the Presbyterian Giving Catalog.

In-person services like Mission in Mission and Mission Service project have been put on hold, and we are not certain if or when they will resume. The groups who used our Fellowship Hall for Bible Study in Spanish, Girl Scouts and TOPS were suspended in March 2020. TOPS will resume using our Kitchen on October 4, each Monday morning, and Girl Scouts will return (primarily outdoors) on October 8, every other Friday.

Looking forward, the Service Committee is discussing ways to be Vital in helping those living near our church to provide for their needs, using our building and volunteers to help with health fairs, health screenings, and possibly feeding the school children in our area on Saturdays, if we can limit it to a manageable number.

Administrative Committee

When the Pandemic hit, the Administrative Committee went to work making sure the equipment for on-line worship was acquired and installed.

In March a refurbished laptop and conference room equipment that included a streaming camera and speakerphone with area microphones was acquired to allow live streaming worship and recordings. A subscription to Zoom for Fellowship and Study as well as session and committee meetings using the new laptop and conference room equipment was initiated. In the summer of 2020, new large video screens were installed in the Sanctuary, and in May, 2021, they were equipped with enhanced wireless network connections to prepare for in-person worship without bulletins or hymnals. An additional refurbished laptop was acquired and installed in the sanctuary to connect to the sound system and the video screens to allow for hybrid in-person and streaming and recorded worship services.

Because giving to the church during the pandemic was reduced by about 50%, Admin initiated a PPP loan in the amount of \$27,800. The loan has been forgiven and considered a grant. We also received a grant of \$5,000 from Mission Presbytery which helped with our worship equipment purchases. From October 2020 through September 2021, we have accommodated our budget shortfall by transferring a total of \$ 70,000 from our Continuing Mission Fund. Fortunately due to a favorable stock market environment, our Continuing Mission Fund has grown about \$20,000 net of these withdrawals.

In order to make giving easier, we provided an opportunity for online giving through our secure, encrypted giving site through Real and Vanco.

In the summer of 2021, we received a generous bequest of \$3,377.74 to contribute to the Continuing Mission Fund from the Estate of Roger and Carol Kallenbach. Because of the importance of the Continuing Mission Fund to carry the church through difficult times we encourage everyone to consider including this fund in your estate plans.

This month, we installed new automated thermostats in the Sanctuary that will allow us to program and change the a/c schedule from the home of church volunteers using a smartphone app. This will eliminate the need of anyone coming to the sanctuary several hours before worship, and we hope will actually reduce the amount of electricity we use. There are plans to replace every thermostat in the church office and Fellowship Hall with similar smart thermostats.

Church Staff Members have retired. Sue Leerhoff retired at the end of January, 2021 and Pat Hudsonpillar retired in Mid-April 2021. Sue's work is replaced by church volunteers and a contract with a one day a week janitorial service that began in June 2021. The Session determined that music leadership will be by volunteers until giving allows for an expanded budget. Currently both giving and expenses are about at 50% of the time before COVID.

This month, we plan to hire a part-time church office secretary who will help the treasurer, the stated clerk, all session committees, and help prepare the worship PowerPoint presentations and schedule volunteers, contract workers and building use by both church and neighbor groups.

The building and grounds have been maintained by volunteers, and the playground equipment, which has significant wood rot, is in the process of repair once materials are available.

Despite the difficulties of this Pandemic, the Administrative Committee, with the help of generous volunteers has kept the ship of our physical plant afloat.

Because we hope to have a stated supply pastor as early as possible in 2021, and hope to call a full time installed pastor within a couple of years, Admin is focused on Stewardship, and restoring our budget and giving to prior levels as soon as possible. Elder John Watkins offers a Stewardship Report that follows.

A Stewardship Tale by John Watkins

I want to tell a story. It's not a Bible story, but a faith based story of sorts. We all have one. And each of us is unique. So, rather than Scripture, (which I have to look up on the internet to rapidly find the proper verses), or waxing philosophically, I will tell my story. I hope you find it entertaining and similar to your own in some ways as I'm sure you have a story you could tell me.

Having parents who were teenagers during the depression years of the '30's, I, like many of my friends, was raised with a distinct upbringing of the value of money. I don't recall the exact age when an allowance was initiated at home, but it was in the single digit years. At my stage in life now and in looking back, I believe this is the best time to teach kids responsibility. They want to do things right, they want to impress their parents, (it's still important at this stage!) and they want to learn correctly to get Mom and Dad's approval. One of the first things I learned with an allowance was that as you receive you should also tithe and darn if they didn't collect that tithe in Sunday school and Mom made sure I knew how to calculate 10%! It started modestly and grew somewhat and never was a lot, but you could buy gum and cheap plastic toys that came out of Japan at Wynn's, (the equivalent 5 & dime). But, I was also never happy with having to cough up that 10% either.

Animated cartoons started to become available on early television on Saturday mornings. That's the closest we can compare to sitting on your rear and just watching; I believe referred to these days as zoned out in front of the tube. Disney was one of the main contributors back then in this space and had a myriad of characters, Mickey and Minnie Mouse, Donald Duck, Goofy and so on. We also had lots of comic books: Superman, Batman, Sgt. Rock, (there were more, but these are the ones I liked and could afford to buy with my allowance. Of course I wished I could fly, but even for a kid that didn't really seem possible/plausible? But, the thing we all do is find someone or somebody to pattern ourselves after; somebody we admire. Our parents maybe, somebody else in the family that seems larger than life, and uncle or aunt? And of course this is an ongoing thing as we grow older and have second thoughts about somebody we used to look up to, but eventually disappoints us. And we find lots of life along the way through those teenage years and become largely the person we want to be and are today with a general direction. Now we have all had modifications along the way, but for me, the early years were the most formative.

Now, perhaps you noticed I didn't mention Jesus Christ in the previous paragraph. I just want to be candid and honest. He had His wins, but they were short-lived and He died horribly and in my opinion lonely. A stark contrast to the never die characters in the cartoons and comic books. I will suffice it to say my teen years were not my best and I was all about myself and generally aimless. My life after high school was a time of observation of the world and how I and everybody else fit in it. I tried to tithe, more out of "brow beating" than from my willingness through faith, but when push came to shove I still looked out for number one, (me).

In conclusion, I have been blessed and knowing: undeservedly blessed. I have been given perspective and time to witness this journey in spite of my selfishness. I don't always want to go to church, but I am generally glad when I do. I get to see you; I see Christ. I get to visit with you; I am talking with Christ. I hear again that Jesus suffered for me and you so that we could have this fellowship and serve and help each other. And I am extremely grateful and now grateful to give. I sincerely hope you have been a faster learner than me and are grateful to God and give gratefully also. God has blessed you in your own story. Perhaps we can share more stories together. I would like to hear yours. (And don't forget God wants to hear from us too in words, deeds and giving of ourselves.)



TRUNK OR TREAT 2021

**DUST OFF YOUR HALLOWEEN COSTUMES!
TRUNK OR TREAT WILL BE HELD SUNDAY NIGHT
OCTOBER 31, 2021
IN FRONT OF THE CHURCH FROM 5:00 TO 7:00P.M.
COME ONE COME ALL!**

HOT DOGS WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR YOUR NOURISHMENT!





6 Bill Dickey
8 Lester Cruse
Katie Christoffersen
9 Nicole Elbers
12 Grace Elbers
13 Joshua Sanchez
15 Jenny Hudsonpillar
Tom Smith

18 Kathy Dickey
19 Kathy Manuel
23 Gloria Dietrich
28 Ruth Ellen Macias
Mary Wright
Jean Bertling



7 Dick & Kathy Buresh
9 Keith & June Stevens

S.P.A.
(Study. Pray. Act.)
Men are Welcome

Spa continues to meet weekly on Wednesdays at noon in the church kitchen. Bring your own brown bag lunch. Join us for study of Our Daily Bread.



P.T.O.
(Presbyterian Take Over)

We meet for breakfast at 9:00a.m. on the first Tuesday of each month. We currently are meeting at the Hometown Cafe that is located on Conway Avenue in Mission. The cafe is located on the East side of the street about midway between the Expressway and HEB. Additional parking is available behind the cafe. If you need more directions, call Gloria Dietrich 956-416-2935.

This is a time of fellowship and an opportunity to get to know each other. The food is good but the service is slow, as the cafe owners adjust to being reopened with new employees. Bring your best manners and your patience.

P.W. / DEBORAH CIRCLE

by Susan North

Remember those special things your grandmother shared with you? Perhaps it was a treasured recipe or the best way to make a bed or a good story about one of your parents. My favorite thing to share from by Grandmother Amanda was, when you shake a rug or blanket out, you must always shake it 3 times while saying, "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!"

Help us begin our Presbyterian Women's Horizon Bible study of "What My Grandmothers Taught Me" by bringing us your own story to share starting Wednesday, October 20, 2021 at Noon in the Fellowship Hall for a brown bag lunch which will be provided by a local restaurant and is a gift from one of our members. Social distancing practiced.

Our study will look at the women in the Gospel of Matthew's genealogy of Jesus.

Questions? Call Susan North at 612-913-2646.



Worship Committee

The first priority of Session, when the State of Texas and Hidalgo County stopped in-person gatherings, was Worship. How would we be able to continue worship? Session decided that we would live stream worship on YouTube and provide a recording of worship on Facebook.

This swift action and the acquisition of streaming equipment allowed us to never miss a Sunday. We have had worship every Sunday since the beginning of the Pandemic. Praise the Lord! Our Worship Team of Eric Dittman, Pat Hudsonpillar, Eddie De La Garza, Deb Rucker and Susan North (and others from time to time) gathered in Fellowship Hall each Sunday Morning to live stream worship to our membership, and anyone in the world who God called to tune in.

On the 3rd Sunday of each month, Mission Presbytery provided a special speaker to deliver the Word through a recording through June, 2021, in order to give the pastor a break.

Attendance (online viewing) at Worship has been very good, a number that exceeded our usual summer worship attendance because it allowed our Winter Texans to worship with us, even after they moved to their summer homes.

With vaccines available in the Spring of 2021, Session agreed to begin worship in person with masks in the Sanctuary beginning with the first Sunday of June, 2021. Attendance in the Sanctuary has been between 30-40, and online attendance has ranged from 50-90 views each week. With large print on our video screens displaying our songs and liturgy, people at the back of the sanctuary have had no problem seeing the words, so hymnals and bulletins have not been missed.

A few volunteers have agreed to lead the singing from the choir loft, and there is some discussion of getting a volunteer to help organize special music from time to time.

Looking forward, we hope to be more Vital to our neighbors in the future by providing worship services in Spanish in addition to our regular 10:30 worship in English.





Fall

October 2021

Sunday Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday

					1	2
3 SS 9:00A.M. WORSHIP 10:30 A..M.	4 T.O.P.S. 9:00A.M. TO 10:00A.M.	5 P.T.O. 9:00 A.M. DOWNTOWN CAFE	6 S.P.A. CHURCH KITCHEN NOON	7	8 GIRLSCOUTS 6:00PM TO 7:30PM	9
10 SS 9:00A.M. WORSHIP 10:30 A.M.	11 T.O.P.S. 9:00A.M. TO 10:00A.M.	12	13 S.P.A. CHURCH KITCHEN NOON	14	15	16
17 SS 9:00A.M. WORSHIP 10:30A.M.	18 T.O.P.S. 9:00A.M. TO 10:00A.M.	19	20 S.P.A. P.W./CIRCLE CHURCH KITCHEN NOON	21	22 GIRLSCOUTS 6:00PM TO 7:30PM	23
24 SS 9:00A.M. WORSHIP 10:30A.M.	25 T.O.P.S. 9:00A.M. TO 10:00A.M.	26	27 S.P.A. CHURCH KITCHEN NOON	28	29	30
31 SS 9:00AM WORSHIP 10:30A.M. TRUNK/TREAT 5:00-7:00PM						