



Faith During a Pandemic

By ERIC O. LEDERMANN

Pastor

According to Pew Research, a quarter of the citizens of the U.S. say their faith has actually grown during the COVID-19 pandemic.¹ Churches have shuttered their doors around the world, but, as the stated clerk of our denomination, the Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, said, “The Church never closed.”

Pastors and church leaders scrambled quickly to find creative ways to continue the primary function of a church: gathering for worship and mutual faith support. Many in the U.S. have opted for some version of online worship on Facebook, YouTube, or Zoom. Others have moved to drive-in worship in the church parking lots—not sure that would work in Tempe when it’s over 100 degrees by 10:00 a.m.

According to a Pew Research survey conducted April 20-26, 24 percent of U.S. adults say their faith has been made stronger as a result of all that’s happened. Only 2 percent say their faith is now weaker. About 47 percent say their faith hasn’t changed much. Among mainline Protestants, 22 percent say their faith is stronger, 70 percent say not much has changed, and about 1 percent say their faith is now weaker. There is something to be said for the slow and steady approach of mainline Protestantism.

Where would you fall on that spectrum? To say the pandemic hasn’t affected us I think would be denial. It’s affected all of us in some form, even it just means having to shift our schedule of outings. Sadly, for millions the pandemic has affected them greatly as they were laid off from jobs because businesses had to close. I’m curious where those folks might fall in Pew’s survey.

It’s been a tough few months. People have been “sheltering in place” as much as they are able. The toilet paper shortage seems to have subsided. But, Cindy just showed me that the cost of hand sanitizer

online has quadrupled—that is, if you can find it anywhere.

The American Psychological Association released research that showed that those who have an active faith life are more likely to find peace in the midst of the chaos that is the pandemic—as schools go back and forth about online or in-person class in the fall, as the number of positive tests skyrocket in recent weeks and begin to drop in other places, as businesses keep trying to re-open only to close their doors weeks later.

Kenneth Pargament, PhD, and professor emeritus of psychology at Bowling Green State University concluded from his research in 2004 of medically ill, elderly, and hospitalized patients, “People who made more use of positive religious coping methods had better outcomes than those who struggled with God, their faith, or other people about sacred matters.”

After two years, those who experienced positive effects of religious faith fared much better spiritually, psychologically, and physically. The study also notes that those with negative coping practices saw declines in their overall health and were at risk for other health-related problems.

So, what are some of those positive effects of religious faith? Glad you asked:

- Encouraging adherents to reframe their lives and events through a positive and hopeful lens;
- Fostering a sense of connectedness with something larger than themselves through prayer, meditation, and taking part in religious meetings, or even listening to spiritual music or taking a walk outside.
- Cultivating connection through religious rituals that help people acknowledge something significant is happening. Rituals can mark beginnings like with weddings, or endings, as is the case with funerals. “They help guide and

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*This issue of the
UPC NEWS & Current Events
is brought to you by...*
the word...

Faith

Faith can mean many things: belief in something where there is incomplete evidence; trust or loyalty to something or someone. From the Latin *fidēs*, which became the English *fidelity*, which is all about “trust” and loyalty, as in: “I have faith in you.” Or, one might even say: “I have faith in this old bridge.”

In early Christianity, faith was all about trusting in the teachings of Jesus. It moved toward believing certain precepts. In recent years, it seems Christianity in the west is moving back to trust and loyalty over precepts.

FAITH IN CRISIS

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sustain people through life's most difficult transitions."²

What are some of the negative effects that some religious beliefs cause during stressful times? According to Dr. Pargament:

- Developing feelings of anger or abandonment, feeling like they're being punished;
- That God will protect them so they don't have to do anything, called "religious deferral"—giving it all to God and absolving oneself for any responsibility. We see this in congregations who are defying CDC recommendations and choosing to worship together without precautions in spite of COVID-19;
- Difficulty lining up behavior with moral or spiritual values. We've seen this in some health-care providers who treat COVID-19 patients, but feel they are being forced to allocate limited resources, putting them in the difficult situation of having to "play God" when it comes to who gets what treatments.²

Jesus was pretty clear that a life lived in obedience to God is not going to be easy. In spite of some people's "let go and let God" perspective, we are not absolved of responsibility for our actions, whether they be acts of commission or omission (what we do and what we don't do). In other words, it can be a choice how we're going to respond to some-

thing. It starts with growing in conscious awareness of our tendencies and choosing to make decisions based on that knowledge, and spending time in prayer and meditation seeking out the wisdom of the Divine. To paraphrase Frederick Buechner: where or how can your gifts meet the world's needs?

Do you tend toward the negative, always seeing what's wrong? If that's the case, does that kind of thinking cause you to just complain or give up? Or, does it make you want to do the hard work of trying different possible solutions to make it right? Do you tend toward the positive, always seeing the silver lining? That's great, so long as it you don't get all Polly-anna about it—believing everything is fine when the world is crashing all around you—a form of escapism.

There are many ways our faith responses we can have. What I see in the gospels, in the life and teachings of Jesus, is choosing to respond with the love and compassion of God through a spirit of hopefulness and an ethic of hard work. And, don't forget, we're all in this together! ■

*Be of good courage
and know that you are loved!*

¹ Claire Gecewicz, "Few Americans say their house of worship is open, but a quarter say their faith has grown amid pandemic," Pew Research Center, April 30, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/04/30/few-americans-say-their-house-of-worship-is-open-but-a-quarter-say-their-religious-faith-has-grown-amid-pandemic/> (accessed July 29, 2020).

² Bryan Goodman, "Faith in a Time of Crisis," American Psychological Association, May 11, 2020, <https://www.apa.org/topics/covid-19/faith-crisis> (accessed July 29, 2020).



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MONTHLY CANNED FOOD DRIVE

August 23, 2020

Fourth Sunday of each month! Drop off at church!

Food pantries are often short of money and protein foods. The pantry at Tempe Community Action Agency (TCAA) needs your contributions of:



- tuna
- beans
- canned meats
- ramen noodles
- canned vegetables
- soups

**Drop off food donations Sunday mornings
in the bins in the narthex.**

Financial contributions may be sent to the office
(make checks out to "TCAA")
with "Food Pantry" in the memo.)

UPC NEWS & Current Events is published monthly. Submissions of announcements, stories, op-eds, and reflections on recent events at UPC are welcomed.

Requirements:

Announcements: 500 words or less
Articles/Reflections: 1200 words or less
Letters to the Editor: 750 words or less
Submissions may be edited for content, grammar, and space available.

**Send submissions
by the 20th of each month to:
newsletter@upctempe.org**

Finance & Endowment Update

By MOLLY WINKLER

Chair of Finance

We hope you are all staying safe and well this summer. The Finance Endowment Distribution Task Force and Endowment Committee wanted to update you on UPC's financial status and make you aware of exciting news about the UPC Endowment Fund.

First and foremost, thank you for faithfully sending in your pledges and other contributions. We have been able to pay all of our staff and meet our basic obligations without using any of our emergency funds. As of the end of June, our year-to-date revenues are slightly better than budget, and expenses are lower – so we had a small surplus going into the summer.

Second, we wanted to let you know about the UPC Endowment Fund. This is a perpetual fund created in 2001 to allow members and friends to donate to UPC with a portion of each year's interest reinvested in the fund and a portion of the earnings used

for worship, mission, Christian education, growth, and capital improvements.

In 2019, investments in the fund allowed the use of \$16,400. In addition, a reconciliation of the fund accounting documents identified an addition \$8,447 from projects approved in 2013 and 2014 that were not used. The allocation of available funds requires that Session appoint an Endowment Fund Disbursement Task Force, which solicits ideas for projects from the various committees and recommends to Session a prioritized list of projects. This process has been completed and Session approved the following projects for 2020:

- Purchasing new assistive listening devices for the sanctuary;
- Purchasing a replacement stove for the Fellowship Hall kitchen;
- Purchasing a camera system for the Sanctuary to support recording and live streaming our worship services;

- An AED (Automatic External Defibrillator) for use on campus; and
- Purchasing 150-200 new chairs for the Fellowship Hall.

In addition to the Endowment funds, the UPC Presbyterian Women have agreed to donate funds to help with the purchase of the Fellowship Hall chairs.

We are blessed to have the ability to fund the projects, all of which help us continue the mission and ministry of UPC.

The Endowment Committee is grateful for the support of this fund and asks you to remember UPC as part of your financial and estate planning.

If you have questions or would like more information about contributing to the UPC Endowment Fund, please contact Rick Casanova, chair of the Endowment Committee.

Thank you and blessings. ■

UPC online ...

www.upctempe.org



... spread the word!

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

1-800-273-TALK

(1-800-273-8255)

Talk to someone.

If you're thinking about suicide, are worried about a friend or loved one, or would like emotional support, the Lifeline network is available 24/7 across the United States.

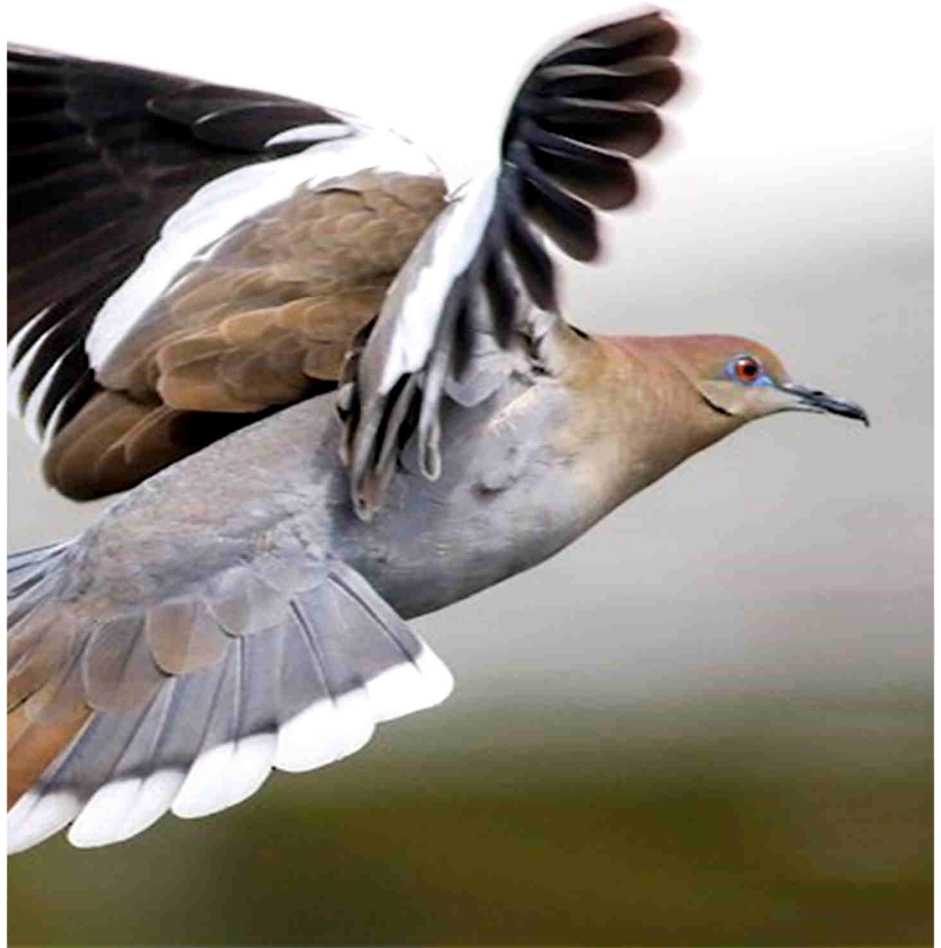
En Español: 1-888-628-9454
Hard of Hearing: 1-800-799-4889
Veterans Crisis Line: 1-800-273-8255

White Wing Dove

By HELEN ALDERSON

Based on an occurrence in 2019

In early May you boldly paraded
Jauntily on my balcony wall. Today
you did not appear. You must have
known hot days were ahead in the
Valley of the Sun, surmising escape.
You flew away somewhere.
You had the freedom just to go.
Society's government, laws, policies,
You ignore. You needn't file a flight
pattern nor be a licensed pilot.
You have no lease to break, nor rental fees.
You do not leave an unpaid Visa account.
When you reach your destination, you
are not required to put down a deposit
before you call a nice tree branch
your home. Nature supplies you with
food, although you must hunt for it.
For a short time, we peered into each
other's lives for we are God's creatures.
We each have a special function in
the scheme and balance of nature. ■



Come Help With I-HELP

Next Evening of Hosting—Fri., August 22, 2020



UPC continues to be a leading and actively participating congregation in a number of missions to help the homeless and hungry, including Family Promise, Meals on Wheels, and I-HELP.

It takes a community of volunteers to offer these services to the most vulnerable members of our wider community. Thank you to those who have helped UPC continue this important ministry. Working together we have provided food and shelter to about 40 homeless men and women every month for over a decade! There are lots of ways to participate, from helping provide dinner and breakfast items, to donating items like white socks, underwear, T-shirts, disposable razors, toothbrushes, and travel size toiletries. Right now, you can also help if you have extra pillow cases—we could really use them! ■

For more info or to volunteer, contact
Jill Russell at
(602) 315-9026 or via e-mail at
jillzy55@aol.com

Presbyterian Women News

*At this time all events have been put on hold.
Hope that all of us stay healthy.*

It is our hope that all women who attended meetings this year feel that they have been both spiritually enriched by the study and nourished through fellowship and sharing with other women. Thanks to all the women who provided hospitality and prepared and led lessons for their circle. We all look forward to another great year at the end of summer when we begin our 2020-2021 season.

Upcoming...

The summer Mission Focus is the TCAA & Food Banks. Please bring donations to the narthex once church services restart.

PW Reading List Books for Check Out

Each year the PW of the Grand Canyon select a group of fiction and non-fiction books for the women of the presbytery to read. The books are selected to enlighten our minds, to nourish our spirits, to challenge our consciences, and to entertain us.

The UPC PW, purchase these books and place them in the UPC Resource Room for anyone in the congregation to check out. During this time of separation and isolation, you are encouraged to spend some time reading a good book. Please feel free to go to the Resource Room and get a book! If you need assistance with checking out a book, please contact Chris Casanova at 480-203-7567.

Grand Canyon PW Reading List 2020-2021

Fiction

A Place for Us, *Fatima Farheen Mirza*. An Indian Muslim family faces the turmoil of their eldest daughter's unarranged marriage and the years' long estrangement of her younger brother.

The Snow Child, *Eowyn Ivey*. The lives of a childless couple are changed by the arrival of a little girl, wild and secretive, at their Alaska homestead. As they are drifting apart in a moment of fun they build a child out of snow.

The Other Einstein, *Marie Benedict*. When Albert Einstein promises to treat her as an equal in love and science, Mileva Maric, his physics classmate, she marries him. This historical novel of love and betrayal touches the heart in many ways.

The Better Man, *Louise Penney*. On Gamache's first day back as head of the homicide department, there is spring flooding, blistering attacks in the media and a father who approaches him pleading for help in finding his missing daughter.

The Lost Girls of Paris, *Pam Jenoff*. A story of friendship and courage centered around three women and a ring of female secret agents during World War II in 1946. Their existence is uncovered by Grace Healy in an abandoned suitcase.

One More River to Cross, *Jean Kirkpatrick*. Two years before the Donner Party, another any set out to be the first wagons into Cal-



ifornia through the Sierra Nevada Mountains. They traveled safely until a heavy snowstorm forced difficult decisions.

Nonfiction

The White House Doctor, My Patients Were Presidents, *Dr. Connie Mariano*. She served as White House physician for nine years. This is a look into the personal lives of our presidents through the eyes of their doctor.

Women Rowing North, Navigating Life's Currents and Flourishing as We Age, She offers a timely look at the issues women face as they age. She explores ways women can cultivate resilient response.

Nanaville, Adventures in Grandparenting, *Anna Quindlan*. In this beautiful, and moving book about being a grandmother, She offers thoughtful observations about her new role, no longer mother and decision-maker but secondary decision maker and support to the parents of her grandson.

Grandma Gatewood's Walk, *Ben Montgomery*. She told her family she was going on a walk. The next anybody heard from her, this sixty-seven-year-old great-grandmother had walked 800 miles along the 2,050-mile Appalachian Trail alone.

Hattie's Book, A Woman's Life in a City's History, *Beverly Jane Phillips*. Hattie lived her whole life in a ghetto on the South Side of Chicago. She was a poor but powerful, determined black woman who fought against the powers of public policy using both charity and social action undergirded by her deep and abiding faith in God.

Nomadland: Surviving America in the Twenty-First Century, *Jessica Bruder*. All over the U.S.A. employers have discovered a new, low-cost labor pool, made up largely of transient older adults. These invisible casualties of the Great Recession have taken to the road by the tens of thousands in RVs and modified vans, forming a growing community of nomads. ■

Old School New School

Christian educators and other leaders are using every tool to reach children and their families during pandemic

By PAUL SEEBECK
Presbyterian Mission Agency

When members of the Christian Education Committee at Pisgah Presbyterian Church in Versailles, Kentucky, met to discuss options for their children during the pandemic, they decided to try something radical.

Knowing most church families have at least one parent (sometimes both) working from home while trying to home school their children — and that if kids spied one more thing to study, they might run — the committee went old school.

Pisgah is sending letters in a packet sent to each child. Inside is a biblical story featuring a character who must overcome a great struggle. Included are optional family discussion topics, such as how the story relates to what family members are experiencing now.

Callie Northern, Pisgah's director of Children & Family Ministries, said they want each family member to know that "God is always with us." To help them believe and trust this, the letter also includes optional activities for families to build the story together — with play dough, drawings and ways to act it out.

"Several parents have been very appreciative of the letters," she said. "One family said they love giving the lessons to their children's grandparents to study together."

Pisgah's old-school approach is just one of the many creative ways that Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregations and worshiping communities are reaching out to children, youth and their families during this critical time. Other examples:

First Presbyterian Church in Kalamazoo, Michigan, started two online youth groups for grades 4–6 and 7–12. During check-in, the Rev. Chrissy Westbury, the church's associate pastor, asks for their "roses and thorns," giving them the opportunity to share their fears and concerns — and what they



found hopeful. "If we can't be there for them during what will be a defining and traumatizing moment in their lives," Westbury said, "how can we expect them to find any relevance in the church?"

Youth at The Presbyterian Church of Bowling Green, Kentucky, are writing notes to isolated members of the church. In addition to meeting weekly online, they're discussing activities they can do when separated, like a virtual movie night. With a particular browser add-on, everyone can watch and chat in real time together about the movie. "We're also emailing weekly 'grace and gratitude' multi-age (curricula) to all family members," said Leslee Kirkconnell, the church's director of Christian education. "This is an excellent time to help parents be the primary faith educators we know them to be."

First Presbyterian Church in Hollywood, Florida, features lessons for young children on its Learning Center YouTube channel. They also have weekly online Waumba Worship for young families and young adults ("Waumba" means "Creator" in Swahili).

Certified Christian educator Jenna Campbell of First Presbyterian Church in Stillwater, Oklahoma, has constructed a website containing helpful resources for

parents, children and youth on topics including family life and seasons in the life of the church.

An intergenerational collaborative effort at Memorial Presbyterian Church in Midland, Michigan, among the church's chancel choir, two local high schools and Central Michigan University led to people in each group singing together Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus" on Easter Sunday. Memorial's senior pastor, the Rev. Matt Schramm, and the director of Worship and Arts, Megan Farison, joined in. Watch the video stitched together by MPC's worship intern, Elijah Schweikert.

The Presbyterian Mission Agency's associate coordinator for Christian Formation, Stephanie Fritz, said she's amazed at how educators and faith formation leaders across the denomination have been resourcing and leading faith communities. She said many are looking ahead to summer to find alternatives to Vacation Bible School and traditional mission trips.

"We need to look at them as leading the conversation about how our churches and faith communities will look different as we emerge from this," Fritz said. ■

Youth in the Church and World

By GINA YEAGER-BUCKLEY

*Associate for Ministries with Youth
Presbyterian Mission Agency*

In the middle of this chaotic summer of 2020, I find myself one early Saturday morning at the recently opened pool that we use in the summer. Perhaps due to my vocation, youth ministry, I really enjoy and learn from observing and listening to young people.

On this morning, I've gotten to the pool early to swim laps. The middle school age swim team of the pool is heavily involved in practice. Lap lanes are full, with two to three teenagers a lane. Their coach, who walks quickly back and forth along the long edge of the 50-meter pool calling out instructions, stops the team and asks them to move to the end of the pool. The coach tells the team (who looks a lot like a herd of cats or kindergartners or flapping/squawking water birds) to quiet down. As the chatter quiets, she tells them about their final exercise sequence. They will swim the full length of the Olympic-size pool underwater.

There is an audible group gasp. I'm pretty sure I gasped out loud, too.

She says, "If you listen, I can help you and this will be an enormously beneficial skill for you to add to your strengthening this

summer. Stop talking and breathe." They stop talking. I see their shiny capped heads stop bobbing around and I hear them breathing.

Their coach says that she has three things for them to remember. First – stop panicking right now. Your heart rate increases when you panic. You need to slow your heart rate so that it feeds the oxygen consistently. And – you don't need to panic. She then tells them some stories about how long the human body can actually be underwater.

Second, she says, "Stack your oxygen sources! You have oxygen sources throughout your body. In your lungs, diaphragm, heart, blood. Imagine as you swim that you are benefiting from each of these places and not just one bubble of air."

Third – if you can see the end of the pool and you feel short of breath, blow out air. You are guaranteed another 5 yards at least. If you know you can't make it, rise up, breathe and get back under. Forget shame. You are strengthening.

Off they go! Hauntingly quiet on the surface but you can see the ripples. I feel so anxious. So many made it to the end. A few heads popped up, looked a bit disoriented at where they were, but at the coach's urging they went back under.

My brain and heart were on fire. To see

so much in one morning. To be reminded of so much in one accidental observation.

Here is the takeaway for us!

Right now, *right now, today*, our young people are practicing, panicking, learning, rejecting, celebrating, mourning, running away and perhaps most of all – enduring. I see myself and my youth worker colleagues in the words of the coach. How we can help our young people by offering concrete, simple, guidance for a swirling time. Stop panicking = get your heart to the place where it is beating so that you can be active, faithful, present. Stack your oxygen sources = find all of the places within you that provide the nutrients you need to go into the world. To face the crazy. To do justice. To deal with the confusion and not be overwhelmed by it or ignorant of it. When you see "edges," try to reach inside to make it to the edge or do what you need to do to get there. But *do not* disregard what comes ahead. There will be celebration. There will be some disappointment. You might want to run away. But do not run away. Run filled with the breath of God. The love and instruction of people around you. Run because this church needs your joy, your presence, and your willingness to do new and scary things. ■

Next day of hosting: Aug. 23-30, 2020

By JOAN GREY

We are delighted to be hosting families for Family Promise on our campus. They will be staying in Rooms 2 and 4-6, and having evening meals in the Fellowship Hall.

If you aren't familiar with this UPC mission program or have a concern about a conflict with the facilities use, please contact Cheri Hardy at (602) 920-5176 or: cheri@tempeagents.com or me, Joan Grey, at (502) 818-1110 or joanmg251@cox.net with any questions.

We would love to have new volunteers to help with this program and are extremely grateful for all of you that faithfully donate your time & money to feed & shelter homeless families. ■



Does the Church Dare to Move Forward?

I don't want to return to 'normal'!

By **DONNA FRISCHKNECHT JACKSON**

Presbyterians Today

As a pastor, I am fielding calls now about getting back into our sanctuary for worship. It seems this desire to get back to "normal" is becoming the new virus sweeping the nation. In a way I can understand the longing to return to worship in a sanctuary. I have a rural congregation with older members who have not been all that quick to embrace virtual worship. I'll admit, though, I'm in no hurry to return to traditional church. I find something exciting in what God is doing with video devotionals and sermons.

Case in point: This past Maundy Thursday we were going to have a dinner followed by a Tenebrae service. There would have been anywhere from nine to maybe 13 people attending. I would have spent about 15 hours planning the service, doing bulletins, coordinating music and then actually driving an hour to the church to lead the worship.

COVID-19 changed that. Instead, I did a video devotional from the porch of my Vermont home and put it on Facebook. By the following morning, more than 100 people watched and 15 shared the message. Traditional worship would have gathered 13 people max. Virtual worship welcomed many more. I think the opportunity God is

presenting us with is a new way of getting the good news out beyond the cloistered four walls of our sanctuaries. We've already begun doing so with virtual worship. Why stop now?

Why? Because the god of traditional church has a tight grip on its children, and as its grip tightens, I feel my heart racing because it just doesn't feel right to go backward.

Early this week I began working on an agenda for a church meeting. As I did, I noticed something unsettling. There were many pre-pandemic business items on it. I'm not saying that we shouldn't discuss replacing the church furnace. Not at all. But am I the only one who hears these conversations as a bit strange in the time we are in now? What happened to the time we have been given in our divine timeout to discern a new way forward? We have been presented an opportunity to reboot our lives, rethink our churches, reassess what's really important — yes, we need a furnace, but I don't want that to take over our discussions. I want the space to breathe in the Spirit of newness.

Today, I woke up sad because of all the talk of reopening our world and getting back to business as usual. After three cups of coffee, sadness gave way to a realization: I don't want normal.

I don't want to go back to what was. I

want what can be. I have been wanting that as a pastor for a long time. I've been wanting to use technology to share the "old, old story of Jesus and his love" with more people beyond our little community.

I have also been campaigning for us to see our time of corporate worship beyond traditional Sunday mornings. After all, studies show fewer and fewer people are wanting to give up their Sunday mornings to go to a church building. They're not saying they don't want God. They just don't want access to God to be so limited — only available at 10 a.m. on Sunday at the church building.

The truth is, I don't want to get back to normal, because that normal was killing me. It was zapping my creativity. It was trying to measure success by how much I took on and got done. It affirmed my worth by the accolades I received. Normal was not normal. It was a half-life. It was shallow. It was wearing me down. Yet we seem to be rushing back to all that is not life-giving.

I have a church meeting tomorrow. I wonder how I will share with my dedicated elders that their pastor doesn't want to be normal. I wonder if any would want to join me in discovering a richer, deeper, bolder life. I wonder if they will want to call a new pastor, one that is content with the old way of being the church. I wonder: Am I the only person who doesn't want "normal"? ■

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Every week we email announcements and church news, including once per month a link to download the monthly

UPC News & Current Events

Make sure not to miss anything by signing up at:

www.upctempe.org/email, or contact the

Church office for assistance.

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AS A GOOD SHEPHERD I CARE FOR YOU AND STUFF, BUT AT THE END OF THE DAY YOU ARE STILL FOOD

05-09-2014

Presbytery of Detroit Writes an Open Letter to Soften Closed Hearts

Seeks to end division and inequality “laid bare” by coronavirus

By MIKE FERGUSON
Presbyterian News Service

Presbytery of Detroit leaders recently published an open letter, written “from a place of deep pain and anger as we witness the division and inequality laid bare by (the coronavirus), particularly in our region.”

Detroit and surrounding Wayne County have been hit particularly hard, and the high number of COVID-19 cases tells “a story of a community with a disproportionately poor population, with high rates of asthma, diabetes, heart disease and high blood pressure — the very conditions that make it more likely for COVID-19 to cause serious symptoms, the very conditions that can end in death when the new coronavirus comes knocking,” the letter says.

The virus “is exposing what was already present in the city of Detroit and many of its suburbs,” the letter states, including:

The lack of good health care and insurance, resulting in health issues including heart disease

The lack of “proper living wages,” resulting in poverty and limited access to healthy food leading to higher rates of obesity and diabetes and high blood pressure

Poor environmental living conditions, resulting in increased cases of asthma

Lack of access to personal care items, including such basics as laundry detergent, dish soap and bleach, common household items that can decrease the spread of the virus

Lack of access to safe transportation and the challenges of close living conditions, which do not allow for social distancing

Lack of access to quality educational opportunities

The vulnerability to disease aced by people living in mass incarceration, particularly African American men.

In the letter, presbytery leadership calls on:

- Government leaders to make testing and health care accessible to all

- Faith leaders, including those in the presbytery’s 75 churches, “to embark on concrete actions that show the value we place on all human life regardless of race, creed or economic status”

- Churches not to compete to “open up first,” but rather to “work across religious, denominational and theological lines to keep our communities safe”

- Majority-race churches to stand beside their minority-race siblings, particularly in the African American, Latino and Asian communities

“All who follow God in the Kairos moment to serve one another, even to the point of self-sacrifice.”

The Rev. Julie Delezenne, moderator of the Presbytery of Detroit, has begun weekly interviews with representatives of some of those 75 churches within the presbytery. The first, posted on the presbytery’s website on April 20, was with Sharon Moore, a ruling elder at St. John’s Presbyterian Church in Detroit, which celebrated its 100th anniversary last year. Moore also chairs the presbytery’s Multicultural Ministry Committee.

Moore told Delezenne she particularly misses the guests to whom St. John’s Presbyterian Church fed lunch three times each week pre-pandemic.

“That time at St. John’s was their coffee klatch,” she said. “Now that we have had to shut down our hunger ministry, we don’t have ways to connect with them.”

It’s not for lack of trying. Church members involved in the ministry have driven around to known encampments, “but



we have not seen them. It’s a heavy burden on our heart. ... What more can I do to find them and make sure they are safe and OK?”

One of the church matriarchs died recently at age 96. For the church’s 100th anniversary, “she’d provided us with a beautiful genealogy report. It’s hard to have these people go away and not have a formal way to grieve together,” Moore said. “There is something about that ability to come together that is making this very hard.”

Asked by Delezenne what churches can do, Moore had at least two concrete ideas: Pray and write letters.

“We as Christians know that prayer works,” Moore said. She suggested that churches unite during a designated hour “to come together and pray for the end of this virus and for compassion for those who are suffering,” she said.

Letters to elected officials — local, statewide and national — can focus on valuing “human life over dollars,” Moore said. “We need supplies without all the snarky remarks.” ■

Chat between the Stated Clerk and a GA co-moderator puts the wrap on Synod School

By MIKE FERGUSON

Presbyterian News Service

LOUISVILLE — Following the Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II's address to Synod School Thursday evening, he and Ruling Elder Elona Street-Stewart, co-moderator of the 224th General Assembly (2020), held an engaging chat in front of more than 80 of the 330 or so people who attended this year's Synod School via Zoom and Facebook.

Synod School is put on each year by the Synod of Lakes and Prairies, which Street-Stewart serves as executive. For the most part during Thursday's discussion, Street-Stewart asked questions and Nelson, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), answered them.

Ruling Elder Elona Street-Stewart is co-moderator of the 224th General Assembly (2020)

She did, however, touch on a couple of matters, saying she and co-moderator the Rev. Gregory Bentley are considering a book that can be read denomination-wide to help Presbyterians learn more about how and why financial assets are distributed the way they are, both among individuals and communities. "We aren't ready to announce yet" which book will be selected, she said. "Several have been recommended to us."

Asked to talk a little about her faith journey, Street-Stewart described being raised as a Seventh-day Adventist. "When we prayed, we prayed a lot," she said, for the nation's leaders, for people looking for a job or who wanted to purchase a home in a neighborhood that didn't want them living there. "We mourned and shed tears over the assassinations that came over and over" during the 1960s, "and we are re-living that now every time a person of color is killed."

Even as a girl, "things were happening in the world we knew weren't right," she said.

After college, where she realized "that

going to chapel alone and studying world religion was not connecting me to the Latino community right outside my dorm," Street-Stewart moved into a neighborhood "where very few people spoke English. It was there I realized that if I am going to be a Christian in the

world, I can't be in a gated community" that's part of an educational institution.

"That still motivates me today," she said. "As church institutions, we surround ourselves with people who look like us and sound like us. I had to leave that, because that's where real life had to be lived. I still see those very much as part of my spiritual practices today."

Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II

Nelson, too, talked about the faith of his upbringing.

"My parents taught me that faith is not what we desire," he said. "It is giving ourselves over to and asking the Lord, 'What do you want of us? We are here to make the world a better place.'"

He grew up in a manse. His mother was "very active in the church," both locally and nationally. His father's ministry "prepared me to understand that I don't control anything." Presbyterians may talk about "what we want to do with our denomination," but it's God who designs a new plan when the plans created by human beings — or even churches — change or aren't possible.

"I really believe our calling is to service," he said, but sometimes "other things get in the way."



Ruling Elder Elona Street-Stewart (left), co-moderator of the 224th General Assembly (2020), and the Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II (right) Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

"We have to remember that the life we have is a gift from God, and it's supposed to be used for the purpose of God in the world God has given us," he said. "We have a tendency to give what's left rather than what we can give."

Asked by Street-Stewart to identify how General Assembly policies can become transformative, Nelson said he heard "a lot of complaints about the assembly out of the fact that we didn't do justice policies. If we don't have another piece of policy, we still have enough," he said. "We are not policy poor. We have enough policy to do whatever we want to do."

At the invitation of the state chapter of the NAACP, Nelson said he's supporting efforts to free an elderly man in North Carolina whom advocates say has been incarcerated unjustly for decades.

"I don't have to go to a policy book to figure this out," Nelson said. "An unjust incarceration has to be met with mercy. How do we restore the person after he gets out of prison? If people want to fight over commas and periods in policies, it's just a waste of time. We are not a church that needs policy and permission to do things. We need to do the work on the ground."

"The permission was given by God a long time ago to do what's right." ■

Churches asked to identify where they can act to address white supremacy

Matthew 25 online event addresses dismantling structural racism from a mid council perspective

By SCOTT O'NEILL and
MELODY K. SMITH
Presbyterian News Service

LOUISVILLE — Nearly 600 people gathered virtually Wednesday to have what is all too often a difficult conversation in a majority white denomination.

With the current unrest and protest in our nation, the call for justice and the dismantling of structural racism is stronger than ever. Committing to become a Matthew 25 church offers one of the first ways that churches can take steps to bring about racial justice.

The Rev. Dr. Diane Moffett, president and executive director of the Presbyterian Mission Agency, welcomed the group with an opening prayer and thanked participants for taking the time to listen, learn and share the important work of dismantling structural racism, particularly in this time of national unrest. In referencing the number of mid councils and congregations who've already accepted the Matthew 25 invitation, she noted that they are not alone.

"We're doing this work together. We know we're facing trying, unprecedented



times — the dual pandemic of COVID-19

ed for decades in the denomination.

and COVID-19 that began in terms of how our nation was founded. I'm grateful we're engaging in this work and doing mission together with the power of the Spirit."

Mid council leaders were asked to share the role that the congregations and mid councils should consider first in creating anti-racist cultures and doing anti-racism work. In a denomination that is predominantly white, participation in the dismantling of racism is too frequently approached as optional. The Matthew 25 invitation, which seeks to build congregational vitality, dismantle structural racism and eradicate systemic poverty, is an invitation to participate and vision to actively engage in the world around us.

To date, 565 churches, groups and worshipping communities have accepted the invitation, which was extended April 1, 2019. In addition, 42 mid councils — representing 6,070 congregations — have agreed to take on one or more of the invitation's three focus areas.

Ruling Elder Elona Street-Stewart is co-moderator of the 224th General Assembly (2020)

Wednesday's Zoom call featured Ruling Elder Elona Street-Stewart, co-moderator of the 224th General Assembly (2020) and synod executive of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies. Street-Stewart said the work of mid councils, congregations and church leaders is recognizing a challenge that's been addressed, identified and reviewed and report-

"Some of it is about facing our inability or capacity to address systemic racism because it means we have to address economic inequities," she said. "We've seen the last two months that repeating headlines is just not enough because the issues have always been there. We need to shift from aspirations about making change to creating actions through resources, knowledge shared via our networks and other tools."

Street-Stewart urged congregations to connect with people of color and indigenous people within their church and referenced a quote from famed journalist and early civil rights leader Ida B. Wells to describe what Matthew 25 is helping the church do: "The way to prevent wrongs is to turn the light of truth on them."

"Engage people who have influence from your pews; we don't need to continue to go away from who we are as Presbyterians," said Street-Stewart. "We have expertise in our pews from people who are connected to their communities and the community support networks."

Along with Street-Stewart, the Rev. Dr. Karen V. Brown, pastor of Hope Presbyterian Church in Baltimore and chair of the Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People, spoke about her amazement at the number of people who have failed to realize the severity of the



Ruling Elder Elona Street-Stewart, co-moderator of the 224th General Assembly (2020) addresses those gathered online.



The Rev. Dr. Marcia Mount Shoop serves Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church in Asheville, North Carolina.

MATTHEW 25

Continued from page 11

problem.

"I feel like all the advocacy and ways I've talked about racism up to now has fallen on deaf ears. But God is good, and it seems that after all these deaths that people's eyes are open so I praise God for that, but we must be led by someone other than us. The dismantling has to happen not just in the church but in the city we live in."

The Rev. Ryan Landino, lead presbyter for transformation with the Presbytery of Great Rivers, used the metaphor of a free-

way on-ramp to describe how predominantly white congregations can take on the challenge of dismantling white supremacy and faithfully live it out.

"Imagine a multi-lane freeway that has different lanes moving at different speeds. Do we have lanes for white people to come into this work? Do we have on-ramps for people to break past the barriers of white supremacy in order to engage the work? I like the metaphor because it still makes space for the fast lanes to go," Landino said. "We have people dying in the streets right now and we can't slow that work down in order to appease white comfort or get folks

onboard."

The Rev. Dr. Marcia Mount Shoop serves Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church in Asheville, North Carolina.

The Rev. Dr. Marcia Mount Shoop, pastor and head of staff at Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church in Asheville, North Carolina, who has worked with multiple congregations around anti-racism, emphasized engaging the body in this work, and getting outside the realm of "just ideas."

"If we just stay in our brains and act like this is just a bunch of ideas, then we aren't really accessing the parts of us that have to change. And the parts of us that have to change are our habits. White-bodied people sometimes are the most oblivious to the fact that we are the major carriers to white supremacy. We're the ones who have kept this system in place."

Participants were invited to attend a four-part course titled "Awakening to Structural Racism: A Pilot Course for the Matthew 25 Curriculum" offered by Stony Point Center. The course will begin on Monday, Aug. 10, and requires registration; learn more here.

This webinar is the second in a series addressing how congregations and mid councils can engage with the three focuses of Matthew 25. The third webinar, focused on eradicating systemic poverty, will be held at 3 p.m. Eastern Time on Wednesday, Sept. 16. ■

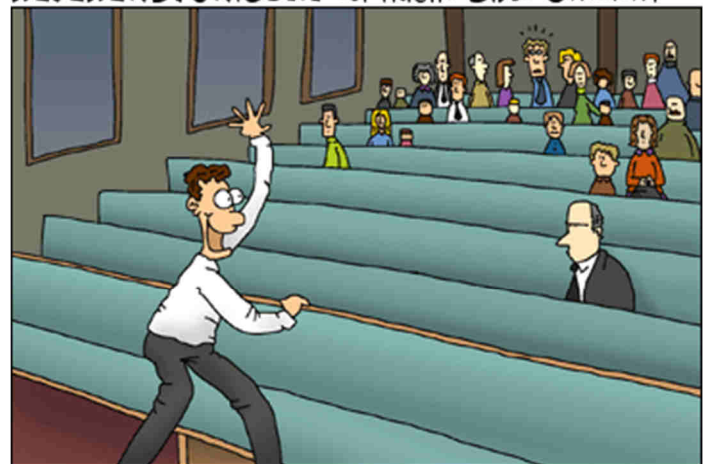
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Thanks to J.R. Lucas (See Mark 10:25) 02-10-2014

GENTLEMEN, I WILL NOW CUT THE RIBBON
AND PROJECT GIGANTIC NEEDLE WILL BE
UNDERWAY

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04-28-2014

TOM YOU WON'T BELIEVE IT I GOT FRONT
ROW SEATING AGAIN OH MY GOODNESS RUN
UP HERE NOW I'LL SAVE IT WHILE I CAN

Worship Volunteer Schedule

Most of what happens at UPC would not happen if not for an actively involved membership! Below is the schedule of worship volunteers for the next couple of months. If you are listed and have a conflict, you are asked to please find a replacement and then contact Ruling Elder Helen Griffin or Sada Reed, co-chairs of the Worship Committee.

To volunteer or get on one of the rotations, Sada Reed or Helen Griffin! Thank you!

August 2020

Trustee on Duty Paula Murray
Deacon of the Month: Andrea White
Sanctuary Readiness Team Position Vacant

August 2—Proper 13/ 18th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Liturgist Position Vacant
Children's Moment Position Vacant

August 9—Proper 14/ 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Liturgist Mary Danforth
Children's Moment Position Vacant

August 16—Proper 15/ 20th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Liturgist Molly Winkler
Children's Moment Molly Winkler

August 23—Proper 16/ 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time

Liturgist Kathy Wagner
Children's Moment Position Vacant

August 30—Proper 17/ 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Liturgist Katie Raines
Children's Moment Katie Raines

September 2020

Trustee on Duty Position Vacant
Deacon of the Month: Laura Knorr
Sanctuary Readiness Team Kathleen Davison, Roann Monson

September 6—Proper 18/ 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Liturgist Jeanette Miller
Children's Moment Position Vacant

September 13—Proper 19/ 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Liturgist Chris Casanova
Children's Moment Chris Casanova

September 20—Proper 20/ 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Liturgist Dan Abbott
Children's Moment Dan Abbott

September 27—Proper 21/ 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Liturgist Fred Boyd
Children's Moment Fred Boyd

2020 Census

The U.S. Census needs you!

Shape the future of our congregation, neighborhood, and community by supporting the 2020 Census. Over the next 10 years, data from the 2020 Census will inform the distribution of hundreds of billions of dollars in federal funds each year that support education, health care, emergency services, housing and food assistance, and more.

In August 2020, census workers will begin visiting households that have not responded to the census to help ensure that everyone is counted. Engage in one-on-one conversations by phone, text, and video chat with members of your community to make sure they and their families, friends, and neighbors — especially those who are considered hard to count — have responded to the census. Let people know they can still respond to the 2020 Census; it's not too late.

The 2020 Census asks a few simple questions about you and everyone who was living with you on April 1, 2020.

The Census Bureau has made adjustments to its 2020 Census operations in light of the COVID-19 pandemic so that you can complete your form online, by phone, or by mail when the invitation to respond arrives.

Over the phone: in English (844-330-2020), Spanish (844-468-2020), or 12 other languages

On-line visit: **"my 2020census.gov"** to begin. ■

You count! Be counted!

Backpack Drive Update



The Board of Deacons is excited to report that a check for \$3,460 was delivered to the Guadalupe Community Center for their backpack drive!

This continues to be a challenging time in so many ways so we feel extremely grateful that despite the circumstances, our UPC family of supporters came through as you always do and made this drive a great success! A heartfelt thanks for your faithful support of our annual backpack drive! ■



August Birthdays

3	Tim Russell, Judy Earl	15	Norm Phillips
7	Marjorie Anderson	20	Paige Murphy-Young
8	Denny Martin, Roy Gust	22	Vivian Teye, Tom Hoepner
9	Elaine Murray, Harriet McAllister	24	Mike O'Connor
10	Larry Seubert	25	McKenna Kemp, Jon Sywassink
12	Laura Risseuw	27	Maggie Fraser
13	Natalie Horne, Brittany Niles	30	Annsley Niemann
14	Barbara Smith	31	Carol Rickel

Prayers of thanks for all these beautiful lives!

If your birthday is missing or we have the wrong date, please contact the office so we can update our records.

Newsletter Submissions

Poems, Stories, Reflections

UPC actively seeks submissions. Did you have a particular "God moment" you'd like to share? Send stories, information, letters to the congregation, photos, and announcements for the UPC News & Current Events.

Send submissions to:
newsletter@upctempe.org
and be sure to review the submission requirements on page 2.

Stay Informed on All-Things-Presby! Subscribe to Presbyterian News Sources

Stay informed about the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.):

PC(USA) News & Announcements

Available in a daily or weekly digest format
www.pcusa.org/newsupdates

Presbyterian Outlook

An independent magazine covering all things Presbyterian
\$19.95/yr, 18 issues
<https://pres-outlook.org>



Presbyterians Today

Award-winning denominational magazine published by the PC(USA). Also available is a free twice monthly e-newsletter
<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/today>

Presbytery of Grand Canyon Weekly E-focus Newsletter

News and views around our presbytery, and words of wisdom from our presbytery leadership
<https://pbygrandcanyon.org/subscribe-to-efocus>

Let us remember in our prayers...

As a community of Christian faith, seeking to follow in the Way of Jesus, it is important we hold one another in prayer regularly. As a spiritual practice, we invite our members to spend time regularly praying over our church directory, lifting up each name to God, and

paying attention to any special nudgings we may experience from God's Holy Spirit to reach out to someone.

Each month we list those who may especially be in need of prayer—particularly our shut-ins. Please hold them in your thoughts

and prayers, and feel free to send a card once in a while to remind them that they are with us in spirit.

If you are aware of a prayer concern, please call the church office or your neighborhood deacon. ■

Homebound Members

Evelyn Colby
Gerry Edson
Elaine Murray
Mary Nickerson

Prayer Requests...

- ✱ Medical personnel and first responders on the front lines of battling COVID-19
- ✱ Teachers transitioning to online teaching
- ✱ The family of Dwayne Fink
- ✱ Don Morton
- ✱ Walt Whittard

- ✱ All of creation, and for the strength to stand up for environmental conservation
- ✱ Those affected by COVID-19, especially the families of those who have died.
- ✱ Elected & community leaders, that they can bring peace to our nation and world
- ✱ UPC Officers: elders, deacons, trustees

- ✱ Military personnel, stateside and abroad
- ✱ Peacemakers/Mission Workers
- ✱ Our nation and world—praying for peace
- ✱ Immigrants, especially those separated from families
- ✱ Those who are suffering & marginalized
- ✱ Those struggling with mental illness

UPC Calendar

Submit corrections, additions, or deletions to the church office at (480) 966-6267 or upc@upctempe.org.

**Check online for updates or to subscribe on your computer or device:
www.upctempe.org/calendar**

AUGUST 2020

*Pastor Eric will be on vacation
June 29, 2020 through July 26, 2020.*

Sun, Aug 2

9:30 am Worship Service
(www.upctempe.org/youtube)

Mon, Aug 3

Maricopa County Elections Dept. (FH)
8:30 pm A.A. Meeting (Rm 7)

Tue, Aug 4

Maricopa County Elections Dept. (FH)

Wed, Aug 5

4:30 pm Staff Meeting (Zoom)

Fri, Aug 7

2:00 pm I-HELP, Quakers (FH, K)
7:00 pm Trustee Meeting (Zoom)
8:30 pm A. A. Meeting (Rm 7)

Sat, Aug 8

7:00 am I-HELP Guests Depart

Sun, Aug 9

9:30 am Worship Service
(www.upctempe.org/youtube)
3:00 pm Youth Meeting (Zoom)

Mon, Aug 10

2:00 pm I-HELP, LDS (FH, K)
8:30 pm A.A. Meeting (Rm 7)

Tue, Aug 11

7:00 am I-HELP Guests Depart

Fri, Aug 14

8:30 pm A. A. Meeting (Rm 7)

Sun, Aug 16

9:30 am Worship Service
(www.upctempe.org/youtube)
11:00 am Church School

Mon, Aug 17

7:00 pm Deacon Meeting (Zoom)
8:30 pm A.A. Meeting (Rm 7)

Thu, Aug 20

3:00 pm PW Coordinating Team
Virtual Planning Retreat (Zoom)

Fri, Aug 21

9:00 am PW Coordinating Team
Virtual Planning Retreat (Zoom)
2:00 pm I-HELP, UPC (FH,K)
8:30 pm A. A. Meeting (Rm 7)

Sat, Aug 22

7:00 am I-HELP Guests Depart
9:00 am PW Coordinating Team
Virtual Planning Retreat (Zoom)

Sun, Aug 23

Family Promise (FH, K, L, Rm 2, 4-6)
9:30 am Worship Service
(www.upctempe.org/youtube)
11:00 am Church School

Mon, Aug 24

Family Promise (FH, K, L, Rm 2, 4-6)
2:00 pm I-HELP, Extra Assistance (FH, K)
8:30 pm A.A. Meeting (Rm 7)

Tue, Aug 25

Family Promise (FH, K, L, Rm 2, 4-6)
7:00 pm Stated Session Meeting (Zoom)

Wed, Aug 26

Family Promise (FH, K, L, Rm 2, 4-6)

Thu, Aug 27

Family Promise (FH, K, L, Rm 2, 4-6)

Fri, Aug 28

Family Promise (FH, K, L, Rm 2, 4-6)
8:30 pm A. A. Meeting (Rm 7)

Sat, Aug 29

Family Promise (FH, K, L, Rm 2, 4-6)

Sun, Aug 30

Family Promise (FH, K, L, Rm 2, 4-6)
9:30 am Worship Service
(www.upctempe.org/youtube)
11:00 am Church School

Mon, Aug 31

8:30 pm A.A. Meeting (Rm 7)

CALENDAR NOTE:

Christian Education, including Sunday School and Wednesday morning Lectio Divina Bible study, will resume in September. The Christian Education Committee is making plans for all online classes and courses. More information will be coming out in August and in the September UPC News & Current Events.

**Get calendar updates at
upctempe.org/calendar.
There you can also subscribe
to the UPC calendar on your
computer or device.**

Location/Room References:

(CH)-Choir Room (CR)-Conference Room/Office (COR/Rm7)-Community Room (FH)-Fellowship Hall (HSR)-High School Room (MSR)-Middle School Room (K)-Fellowship Hall Kitchen (L)-Lounge (MR)-Meeting Room (N) Nursery (PO)-Pastor's Office (Rm#)-Room Number Indicated (S)-Sanctuary

UPC NEWS & Current Events (USPS 652-720)

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Quick Links and Contacts for UPC Activities

- **Sunday morning worship** at 9:30 a.m. (www.upctempe.org/youtube)
- **Sunday morning fellowship** at 10:30 a.m., following worship (www.upctempe.org/fellowship)
- **Days for Girls:** For training and lending a hand contact Helen Griffin (helen.e.h.griffin@gmail.com)
- **Deacons:** Contact your neighborhood deacon if you have a particular need or just want to chat.

Buy Groceries at Fry's, Shop at Amazon, *and* Raise Funds for UPC Youth Ministry

Supporting youth ministry is as simple as shopping!

Do you shop at Fry's using your VIP card? Enroll or re-enroll in the Fry's Community Rewards Program by visiting www.frysfood.com/topic/new-community-rewards-program. Register using your Fry's VIP account and our organization number (NN199). Each time you swipe your VIP card at checkout, a portion of the sale will go straight to UPC!

Do you shop at Amazon.com? AmazonSmile is a simple way for you to support UPC's youth ministry every time you shop, at no cost to you. AmazonSmile is available at smile.amazon.com on your web browser and can be activated in the Amazon Shopping app your phone or tablet. To shop at AmazonSmile simply go to smile.amazon.com or activate AmazonSmile on your Amazon Shopping app. On your first visit to smile.amazon.com, search for "University Presbyterian Church Tempe," click on "Select" next to UPC, and start shopping. Be sure to always go to smile.amazon.com for UPC to receive funds. You can change your charity at any time. Simply select "Change your Charity" in "Your Account."