



Holly Presbyterian Church Connections

November Newsletter | Volume 20, Issue 11

From the Lion's Den (October 6, 2020)

We recently passed the six-month mark of the Covid-19 pandemic. As I write this, the spread of the virus is increasing in 38 of the 50 states, and "pandemic fatigue" is setting in. There is increased anxiety and conflict in congregations, patience is wearing thin, and leaders are exhausted. So the following helpful and insightful Twitter thread by Aisha Ahmad, an award-winning international security scholar at the University of Toronto, was perfectly timed. It has gone viral and has been expanded into an article in The Telegraph, a UK newspaper. Here is the thread:



The 6-month mark in any sustained crisis is always difficult. We have all adjusted to this "new normal," but might now feel like we're running out of steam. Yet, at best, we are only 1/3 the way through this marathon. How can we keep going?

First, in my experience, this is a very normal time to struggle or slump. I **always** hit a wall 6 months into a tough assignment in a disaster zone. The desire to "get away" or "make it stop" is intense. I've done this many times, and at 6 months, it's like clockwork.

This time, our crisis is global and there is nowhere to run. That's OK. I've had to power through that 6-month hump before and there is life on the other side. Right now, it feels like we [are] looking ahead at [a] long, dark wintery tunnel. But it's not going to be like that.

Rather, this is our next major adaptation phase. We've already re-learned how to do groceries, host meetings, and even teach classes. And we have found new ways to be happy and have fun. But as the days get shorter and colder, we need to be ready to innovate again.

This is my first pandemic, but not my first 6-month wall. So, what can I share to help you? First, the wall is real and normal. And frankly, it's not productive to try to ram your head through it. It will break naturally in about 4-6 weeks if you ride it out.

Of course, there are things we have to do. Work. Teach. Cook. Exercise. But just don't expect to be sparkingly happy or wildly creative in the middle of your wall. Right now, if you can meet you[r] obligations and be kind to your loved ones, you get an A+.

Also, don't be afraid that your happiness & creativity are gone for the rest of this marathon. Not true. I assure you that it will soon break & you will hit a new stride. But today, roll with it. Clear away less challenging projects. Read a novel. Download that meditation app.

Frankly, even though we cannot physically leave this disaster zone, try to give yourself a mental or figurative "shore leave." Short mental escapes can offer respite and dis-

tance from the everyday struggle. Take more mental "leave" until you clear the wall.

In my experience, this 6-month wall both arrives and dissipates like clockwork. So, I don't fight it anymore. I don't beat myself up over it. I just know that it will happen & trust that the dip will pass. In the meantime, I try to support my mental & emotional health.

Take heart. We have navigated a harrowing global disaster for 6 months, with resourcefulness & courage. We have already found new ways to live, love, and be happy under these rough conditions. A miracle & a marvel. This is hard proof that we have what it takes to keep going.

So, dear friends, do not despair of the 6-month wall. It's not permanent, nor will it define you in this period of adversity. Trust that the magic that helped you through the first phase is still there. Take a breath & a pause. You'll be on the other side in no time.

There is more detailed advice in the linked article. One thing I have stressed in the pandemic is "put on your own mask first." Even Jesus occasionally sought refuge from the pressures of ministry. It's okay to take a break when you need one. It's okay NOT to make that phone call today or stay up all night perfecting a sermon. When we take care of ourselves, we are better prepared to take care of others. And when we are more aware of our own stress, we are less likely to take it out on others. So, go easy on yourselves, be kind to one another, and BREATHE.

Faithfully,

Dan Saperstein, Executive Presbyterian

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From the Lion's Den (October 21, 2020)

This is my last column before Election Day; the next time I write we might have decided as a nation who will be our president for the next four years – but it is also quite likely that we might not know for days or weeks later. This has been one of the most polarized elections in my lifetime. Elections not only divide nations they can divide congregations too. In virtually every congregation you will find avid supporters on both the political right and the left. Political wounds in the body politic can also afflict the Body of Christ.

Presbyterians are familiar with political divides. In our long history we have often been divided over political issues. The earliest denominational split occurred in the 1720s over whether ministers may be appointed by the civil magistrate (i.e., the king or his deputies). Later splits occurred over important issues like the abolition of slavery, civil rights, and, most recently, gay marriage. I still hear members upset over a General Assembly action to receive donations for a legal defense fund for Angela Davis fifty years ago.

But Presbyterians also understand that our unity is not in our political beliefs, but in Christ, who alone is head of the church. The very first "Historic Principle of Church Order," written as a preface for our first Book of Order in 1788 and included ever since, famously states, "God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from [human] doctrines and commandments... which are in anything contrary to his Word,

or beside it, in matters of faith or worship" (F-3.0101). Another founding principle states, "we... believe that there are truths and forms with respect to which [people] of good characters and principles may differ. And in all these we think it the duty both of private Christians and societies to exercise mutual forbearance toward each other" (F-3.0105).

In 2020, however, our tolerance for disagreement is low. We are already stressed and anxious over the COVID-19 epidemic, racial injustices, public protests, and depictions of urban violence, made more intense by cable news and social media. Even benign statements of biblical social values by pastors and congregational leaders can trigger rapid and disproportionate reactions. And the leaders themselves are stressed to the breaking point trying to adapt to ministry in a time of pandemic. If this is how we are feeling now, how will we feel when Election Day divides us into "winners" and "losers"?

Let me propose that congregations consider incorporating themes of mutual forbearance and reconciliation into our worship on November 1 and 8. The General Assembly has shared liturgical and educational resources for Election Day on its website. There is also a complete liturgy for a Service of Reconciliation. Preachers on November 1 may want to incorporate Jesus' Beatitudes from the lections for All Saints Day as a summons to humble discipleship; on November 8, the Old Testament lesson from Joshua 24 in which Joshua summons the tribes of Judah from their separate ways to unite in service to God alone offers a call to unity among God's people.

Among the resources in the new Book of Common Worship are these prayers for the nation and the church, which I invite you to make your own:

Under your law we live, great God, and by your will we govern ourselves. Help us as good citizens to respect neighbors whose views differ from ours, so that without partisan anger, we may work out issues that divide us, and elect candidates to serve the common welfare; through Jesus Christ the Lord.

May the God of justice lead us through the tumultuous seas. May the Christ who came to dwell among us renew the strength of our dreams. May the Holy Spirit guide us to still waters where justice, solidarity, and peace reign. Amen.

Faithfully,

Dan Saperstein, Executive Presbyter

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Birthdays for November

Nov 19th	Beth Dryer	Nov 25th	Roberta Single
Nov 19th	Jim Single	Nov 27th	Barb Brown
Nov 22nd	Eric Davis		

May God Bless you throughout the year ahead!





Our next outdoor worship will be in the church parking lot. It will be Sunday, November 8th at 2pm. Communion will also be served. You will receive your grape juice and wafer when you come in. It is totally sealed. You will remain in your vehicle. Rev. Dawn Russell, Moderator will be preaching.

Here are a few things you need to know:

1. There has been a resurgence of COVID-19 in Michigan, including in Fenton, Grand Blanc, and Holly. Three of our church members have been infected: Carlee Ramirez, Dessalee Cook (who is doing well), and Donna Miller (who has been in the hospital for a week and is currently in the COVID-19 wing.) As a result, Session has decided not to resume worship services in the church building.

2. We have decided to hold a worship service in the parking lot at church on November 8th. We will hold the service at 2 p.m.

Rev. Dawn Russell from the Linden Presbyterian Church will preach from a location in the parking lot.

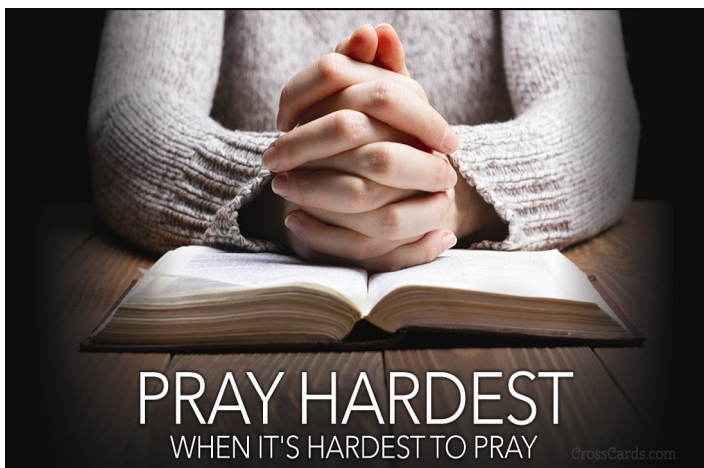
We will use an FM transmitter to send her words to the radios in your cars. You can stay in your cars listening to the service; you can even leave the car running for warmth if you'd like.

We will be having communion. You can either bring your own bread and drink, or we can provide a prepackaged wafer and small cup of juice to you. This will be given to you as you arrive.

After the worship service is over, if you'd like you can stay for some outdoor fellowship with others in the parking lot.

We hope to continue holding parking lot worship services on a regular basis after November 8th.

If you have any questions, please contact Jim Lyles at 248.634.4610.



By now you have received a letter from session about prayer. Please remember to include someone in your prayers daily.

Don't forget!!

When you go to bed on October 31st, turn your clocks back an hour. You get to sleep another hour.



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Mission Study Team Update-

Thank you to all who completed the Congregational Survey. We were pleased to receive 32 in total and the results have been shared with the Pastoral Nominating Committee. The feedback you provided, as well as some demographic and other pertinent information, has been used to create a more formal report which will be shared with you in the near future.



God Bless,

Jan Bradshaw - Bob Killewald - Ellen Paulson

Finance Team

Income September \$ YTD \$

Expense September \$ YTD \$

Thanks,

Carrie Duncanson, Vicki Lyles, and Bob Killewald.





Iobst family



Keefer family

Our Missionaries - The Iobst family (now in France), The Keefer family (Athletes in Action-U of M Ann Arbor).

Prayers from the Presbytery –

Elder Don Wixson, Commissioned Ruling Elder of Vassar-First, who is being treated for cancer.

Our churches currently in pastoral transition.

Our Mission Co-Workers:

Lucy Der-Garabedian serving in Lebanon.

Cathy Chang and family serving in the Philippines.

Michael and Rachel Ludwig serving in Niger.

Joys and Concerns

- For all those sickened and threatened by the corona virus here in the United States and around the world;
- Prayers and comfort for the family of Dave Sudbury (friend of Judy Studer for 51 yrs.).
- For healing, strength, and peace for: Carlee Ramirez, Donna Miller, Dessalee Cook, Cathie Killewald (Bob), Lisa Martin's mother, John Schettling (Tom Schettling's cousin), Kathleen Conover (Carlee Ramirez's colleague and friend), three of Karen Haneline's co-workers, Charlotte Tinker-Bryant (friend of Sherry McLaughlin), Kay VanderKuy, Norm and Char Clement, Sue Polack (Sherry McLaughlin's sister-in-law), Kim Watkins (Laura Parker's sister in law), Fran Olson, Jim Killewald (Bob & Cathie's son), Hadleigh Banks, Jim Pelton, Linda Burns, Jan Owens (Rev. Sharlyn's sister), and William Woodard (Rev. Fred Gates' grandson);
- For our members who are home bound, or in care facilities;
- For those who are suffering from natural and man-made disasters;
- For those serving, or who have served, in our military;
- For our country, its leaders and for world peace in a troubled time;
- For all the churches in our Presbytery that are in transition;
- And for our church, and our future pastor who is coming to lead us.



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