

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Shelbyville, Tennessee
December 20, 2020
Fourth Sunday of Advent~Love

Dear Friends,

As I'm sure you are aware our nation passed a grim milestone this past weekend. We have now lost over 300,000 of our fellow Americans. I know some of them were your friends and perhaps even relatives. My thoughts and prayers are with you. I know the pain of dealing with the untimely death of a loved one. It's a different kind of grief from the loss of someone who is ready for their next adventure.

So far, the warnings of a second surge have been accurate. There is no reason to believe these same experts are wrong when they warn/predict January and February could well be the worst months of this pandemic. Hospitals and health care workers are already being pushed beyond their capacities. This will only get worse as infections continue to rise.

Your session met Monday night to discuss how to respond to this surge in COVID-19 infections and increases in hospitalizations and deaths. After much conversation it was decided to immediately suspend in-person worship beginning this Sunday, December 20th and extending through the end of January.

Regrettably, this includes our Christmas Eve services and in-person committee meetings as well. We are encouraging our committees to meet via Zoom through January. As of right now Shirley and I will still be in the church office.

This decision was not made lightly but made in love for our members. The numbers are staggering. It was with these realities in mind that we made our decision. We do so with regret. We all miss being together on Sunday mornings. But I believe it is the right and loving thing to do. And I don't regret that.

So, we will continue to livestream Sunday morning worship. We are still debating about the Christmas Eve service. Do we prerecord so members can watch it at a time that fits into their schedule or do we go with a livestream on Christmas Eve at 5PM? We will let you know what we know when we know it.

Your session with your property committee taking the lead (thank you Rob Marsh) is looking into installing the necessary equipment to continue livestreaming our worship service even after the pandemic is in our rearview mirror.

We all agree livestreaming is here to stay so we need to act accordingly. Video and audio quality are high on our list. We will keep you informed as to our progress. Who knows what new ideas we will come up with about how to use this as a tool for ministry and to increase and upgrade our "digital footprint" so folks can follow us here?

I will end by saying all our decisions are contingent. They are based on the risk to the health and welfare of our members. With the virus now running rampant in our communities your session felt now was time to take these actions.

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If the experts misjudge January's number and they are declining instead of surging, your session will reconsider our decisions. As I have said on several occasions lately, long-range planning is no longer spoken in terms of years but rather weeks and months (days maybe?).

So far, the infectious disease experts have been right more often than they have been wrong. I, regrettably, am expecting January and February to be as bad as they are predicting. I just don't want any of you to be among those who become a statistic. I like you just the way you are.

Take care and stay safe.

Grace and Peace,
Taylor

SERVICE FOR THE LORD'S DAY ~SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2020

Third Sunday of Advent~ Love

Welcome and Announcements	Rev. Dr. Taylor Todd
Youth and Children's Announcements	Cindy Lamb
Prelude	Billie Crowell
Advent Greeting	
Liturgy of the **Love** Candle	Terry and Ginny Saylor

Call to Worship **Psalm 89** Rev. Dr. Taylor Todd

Leader: I will sing of Your steadfast love, O Lord, forever; I will proclaim Your faithfulness to all generations.

People: I declare that Your steadfast love is established forever; Your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.

Leader: You said, "I will establish your descendants forever, and build your throne for all generations."

People: Let the heavens praise Your wonders, O Lord, Your faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones.

ALL: Come, let us worship God!

*Prayer of Preparation Rev. Dr. Taylor Todd

*Call to Confession

***Prayer of Confession**

O God of compassion have mercy upon us, we pray. You send forth Your Spirit, yet we ignore Your counsel. Christ dwells among us, yet we fail to obey him. Hear us now as we confess our sin. We sing of peace on earth, yet hostility continues. Angels herald good tidings, yet we commit evil deeds. We err in our judgment of what You want from us. We seek to appease You with offerings, earn Your favor by doing good deeds, or garner a blessing through making some sacrifice. Forgive us our nature that is prone to buy favor, and in Christ restore us to a right relationship with You. Amen.

Time for Silent Confession

Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

*Assurance of Pardon

*Gloria Patri (Instrumental) Billie Crowell

*Passing of the Peace
Leader: Peace be with you.
People: And also with you.

PROCLAIMING THE WORD

A Time for Young Christians Kate Canady

Prayer for Illumination

Scripture Reading: **Isaiah 9:2, 6-7 and Luke 1:26-38**

Sermon: "**How Can This Be?**" Rev. Dr. Taylor Todd

Music: "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

Chase Clanton, Guitar & Olivia Mason, Violin

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

***Profession of Faith** The Holy Spirit

"The Holy Spirit is 'the giver and re-newer of life' who instills our faith and enables us to follow Jesus Christ. The Scriptures describe how the Spirit moved at the dawn of creation, anointed Christ in baptism, raised Jesus from the dead, and was poured out on the Church at Pentecost. The same Spirit is still at work in the life of the Church and the life of the world.

The Holy Spirit manifests God's gracious action and empowers our grateful response. The Spirit gathers us for worship, enlightens and equips us through the Word, claims and nourishes us through the Sacraments, and sends us out for service. To each member of Christ's body, the Spirit gives gifts for ministry in the Church and mission in the world."

Book of Order, Directory for Worship, W-1.0105

SEALING OF THE WORD

Prayers of the People and The Lord's Prayer

All: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever. Amen.

*Doxology (Instrumental) Billie Crowell
Prayer of Dedication

BEARING AND FOLLOWING THE WORD INTO THE WORLD

*Charge and Blessing Rev. Dr. Taylor Todd
*Postlude Billie Crowell





Concerns for Prayer

Chanse, Catherine, & Jack Bartlett (Family of Aaron & Connie Crafton)
Doris Cochrane (Friend of Rev. Dr. Taylor Todd)
Matthew Croson (Nephew of Charlotte Williams)
Evelyn Davidson (Member)
Bob & Alice Durio (Members)
Pat Edmiston (Friend of Christy Jensen)
Gina Foutch (Daughter of Shirley Luscinski)
The Family & Friends of Liz Gassaway (Friend of Connie Crafton & Debbie Kee)
The Family & Friends of Cory Hartbarger (Former Member)
Kelli Hayn (Friend of Ginger Shofner)
Ed & Elaine Holcombe (Members)
Chad Hunter (Cousin of Ginger Shofner)
Margaret Jarrell (Member)
Carolyn Matusek (Member)
Gail Parsons (Member)
Jim Sepull (Member)
Naomi Thompson (Mother of Adrian Bomar)

<u>Those in Military Service</u>
LT Andy Canady (Member)
Airman Chase Blanton (Member)

Fourth Sunday of Advent



Loving and gracious God,

When the days grow longer, casting long, cold shadows allowing fear and despair into our lives, ***Let my*** light shine brighter.

When the task grows more wearisome filling valleys and flattening mountains building highways in the desert ***Be the*** strength in my bones.

When I wait on you and they shake their heads saying, "Have you not heard the news?" ***Keep in*** my heart the great good news that makes even the child in the womb leap with joy: ***That You are coming into the world.***

May I praise You in shadow as well as light. ***May I*** praise You in winter as well as spring. ***May I*** praise You in silence as well as song. ***May I*** praise You in solitude as well as companionship. ***May I*** praise You in illness as well as health. And when the last, glowing beam disappears over the horizon and darkness shrouds the land, ***Give me*** the grace to say to all, ***"Despair not. Morning is coming."***

Come, Lord Jesus, come. Amen



BOB and GREG GARNER
for Greg Garner Scholarship
from Bailey and Trena Little
Bill and Kathy Garner

ANNOUNCEMENTS & EVENTS

Worship~The Session voted to move all worship services to on-line only beginning immediately with this coming Sunday's service through January.

Clothe Our Kids of Bedford County—our church collected 22 pairs of tennis shoes. If you would still like to contribute, there is a drop box located at the New Covenant Christian Bookstore.

Friday, December 18th – Book Club – 11am – Never Rest Park – Bring your lawn chairs and a blanket or two. ***"The Good Lord Bird"*** by James McBride

Come join us!

Advent Readers and Candle Lighters
4th Sunday of Advent-December 20th
Terry & Ginny Saylor

Christmas Eve-December 24th
Aksel, Christy, Annie-Grace, Molly, & Zoe