
MAY 2020 NEWSLETTER

Ionia First Presbyterian Church

At a Glance

Sunday Worship:
10:00 a.m.

All worship services within the physical walls of the church remain suspended, through May 18. For current guidelines, see page 3 below.

Online services will continue to be broadcast at 10:00 a.m. live on the First Presbyterian Church of Ionia's Facebook page.

Words From The Pastor

The Need for a Culture of Compassion Now

The world of May 2020, when this newsletter appears, is unrecognizable from the one of a mere two or three months ago. The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically altered the human landscape as we know it, forcing us to adopt routines and patterns of behavior we never would have imagined for ourselves before the outbreak.

For some this “new normal” has been harder to bear than for others. The author Charles Eisenstein recounts an incident involving his friend. She was in a grocery store and saw a woman sobbing in the aisle. Violating the “social distancing” protocols, she went immediately to the woman and gave her a hug. Through her tears, the woman thanked her and said, “This is the first time anyone has hugged me since the quarantine began.”

Don't misunderstand. I'm not giving the command, “go and do likewise” here. It's not my intention to contravene state and federal guidelines that our elected officials have imposed to protect citizens from exposure to the corona virus. It is, however, to call attention to the heavy emotional toll that millions have been bearing in having to adhere to them.

And I refer not only to those of us who live alone. Graduating high school and college seniors will have no baccalaureate exercises to mark a critical transition into the next stage of their lives. Furloughed workers are uncertain about their future prospects. Indeed, none of us still of working age knows exactly what this will all mean for the nature of work itself in the coming months and years. And then there are those already in poverty or in refugee camps or dislocated by armed conflict. The UN is now warning us of a famine of biblical proportions because of corona virus. Thirty countries in the

May Birthdays

5/3 Ami Cox
5/3 Emily Furman
5/6 Jeremiah Helsius
5/7 Margaret Story
5/9 James Bosley
5/16 Marsha Kohloff
5/18 Evelyn Ransom
5/19 Kathy VanSyckle
5/21 David Kohloff
5/21 Rebecca Speer
5/24 Wade Arnold
5/24 Marilyn McKay
5/25 Marcia Brown
5/25 Robert Sykes Jr.
5/28 Laela Agostini

developing world will stand at the brink of mass starvation if global leaders do not take action very soon.

Most of the news these days is bad news. But we should also remember the gestures of compassion that people are extending to one another that go largely unreported. And above all we should remember the communion of saints. We mean here the invisible bonds of fellowship that unite Christians in all times and places. Since we are the body of Christ, when one part suffers, every part suffers with it (1 Cor. 12:26). We need now more than ever to give expression to this fundamental reality. We need to show compassion to those most vulnerable among us by praying and doing for them what we are able. And we need to witness to the wider world by extending that same compassion to those not yet part of the body of Christ.

First Presbyterian, Ionia has distinguished itself for its ministries of compassion. Indeed, it is fundamental to our identity, as we proclaim in our "who we are" statement: "By Word and sacrament, the means of grace, God builds up our community and empowers us to be a witness to his kindness and compassion in the world." As we impatiently long for the return of human connection and community, "let us not grow weary in doing good, for we will reap a harvest if we do not give up" (Gal. 6:9).

Blessings to you all,

Pastor Chris

Holy Humor

While working for an organization that delivers lunches to elderly shut-ins, I used to take my 4-year-old daughter on my afternoon rounds. She was unfailingly intrigued by the various appliances of old age, particularly the canes, walkers and wheelchairs. One day I found her staring at a pair of false teeth soaking in a glass. As I braced myself for the inevitable barrage of questions, she merely turned and whispered, "The tooth fairy will never believe this!"

A little boy opened the big family Bible. He was fascinated as he fingered through the old pages. Suddenly, something fell out of the Bible. He picked up the object and looked at it. What he saw was an old leaf that had been pressed between the pages. "Momma, look what I found," the boy cried out. "What have you got there, dear?" With astonishment in the young boy's voice, he answered, "I think it's Adam's underwear."

A Statement about COVID-19 From our Presbytery

COVID-19 struck our state with greater intensity than many other states; and our state instituted “Stay Home, Stay Safe” orders. These “shelter in place” directives were followed by more detailed instructions regarding essential and non-essential activities. And now it appears that the return to the “new normal” most likely will be modulated, possibly regionalized, different for different segments of the population, and that restrictions on the size of gatherings will likely be lifted incrementally over time.

We are Presbyterians. We like to have a plan and then implement decently and in order. Some of you have asked for advice and guidance about worship services and other meetings. We have examined the guidelines from the CDC and the list of indicators to be used by the Michigan state governmental bodies, and we have consulted with leaders from other presbyteries.

It is apparent to us that our knowledge about the nature, transmission and longer-term effects of the virus is expanding and becoming more refined over time. There are a host of questions that churches will need to answer before beginning to worship in person. A few of the more obvious are: How do we clean our sanctuaries, halls and bathrooms? How do we navigate our way when there are multiple conflicting opinions on the internet about transmission, effects and safe activity? How do we protect persons from others who fail to maintain appropriate social distancing?

Recent developments demonstrate that there will be multiple other questions that will arise as we discover more about the virus and its effects. In the interest of safety for ourselves and the communities we serve, recommend the following:

- Congregations do not meet for worship services in person through at least July 5, 2020 but rather continue to utilize various technologies to provide worship experiences for congregational members and others.
- That other church meetings (Bible study, Session meetings, committee meetings, etc.) honor the applicable maximum number of persons limit (currently 10) permitted for your area, and then only to the extent that the social distancing guidelines (currently six feet) can be maintained.

If you have questions about these recommendations, please contact either of us.

While the recommended style of worship and meeting within our homes is not something that we would have chosen prior to the pandemic, some astute observers have pointed to the parallels with the New Testament church. We hope that their fervency in prayer, reliance on Holy Spirit for direction, and expectant hope in God will also characterize this time for the Presbytery of Lake Michigan.

Serving God and God’s people in the Presbytery of Lake Michigan,

Fran Lane-Lawrence, Transitional Co-Leader/Stated Clerk

Cal Bremer, Transitional Co Leader

Editor’s Note: Our worship services and activities are suspended until May 18. The July 5, date will be a guideline for us, but we also will be monitoring the data and our decision about reopening will ultimately be at our own discretion.

Our Church Has A New Website

The First Presbyterian Church of Ionia has a new website. The address is: <https://1stpreschurchionia.com> However, that is a mouthful to remember. You can copy that address and paste it in your browser. Or you can search with something like “Presbyterian church Ionia” in your browser search feature.

Until we have regular office hours, you may have to wait for a response to your contact requests. If you have any questions, call 517 348-9669 and Lee Hunsberger will help if he can.

Budget and Finance Q&A

Q: If the office is closed, how are bills getting paid?

A: March 16 was the last time checks were produced from our church Quickbooks system. Since then, one of the congregation has paid the phone, lights, gas and water bills.

Q: What about paying the staff?

A: Staff who have not been working will not be paid. Pastor Chris is owed six weeks compensation as of the end of April. We will see that the pastor is compensated.

Q: Do we have enough money to pay the bills?

A: Currently we can cover obligations until August.

Q: Is there any way we can contribute now?

A: Yes, two ways. You can send a check to the church at P.O.Box 125, Ionia, 48846 or you can contribute via the PayPal donate button on the church website.

The most important thing you can do during this most unusual time is to have faith. Christ will see us through this test.

Donate with Pay Pal

We are accustomed to doing business the old-fashioned way, eye to eye with a handshake. Until recently, that has served us well. However, the virus which keeps us at home and apart has issued a wake-up call. We cannot conduct the business of the church exclusively in the old-fashioned way we prefer.

Fortunately, our new website allows us to contribute via Pay Pal. Enter ioniafpc in the search feature of your web browser. That will give you a list of choices. Select the church's new web page. Then, on the menu bar, select donate. The program should take you to your Pay Pal account.

Pay Pal will keep a record of your donation. Once we start keeping accounts again, your account will be credited. If you do not have Pay Pal, go to Pay Pal and enroll. The peace of Christ be with you.

Announcements

Plastic Caps Project

For Carter, a special needs child, the congregation has been collecting plastic caps for use in the building of furniture made entirely of recyclable materials. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, we have temporarily suspended this project.

Help for Church Families

During this difficult time, we have been delivering groceries every two weeks to four of our families. We try to take them a wholesome meal along with canned goods, bread, peanut butter, etc. If you would like to contribute to this project, it would be very much appreciated. You can leave your items at the church on the table in the quilts room or drop them off at Mary Williams #39; home. If you leave it at the church, please call Mary and let her know. If you want to donate money rather than shopping for items, that would be great. Again, please contact Mary regarding your donation. Thank you.

First Presbyterian Staff

Rev. Dr. Chris Dorn
Deb Montgomery
Mike Kauffman
Steve Slaughter

Pastor Tel. 616-610-5982
Secretary
Organist/Pianist
Custodian



