

# RISE

ST. SIMONS  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH

Issue 04

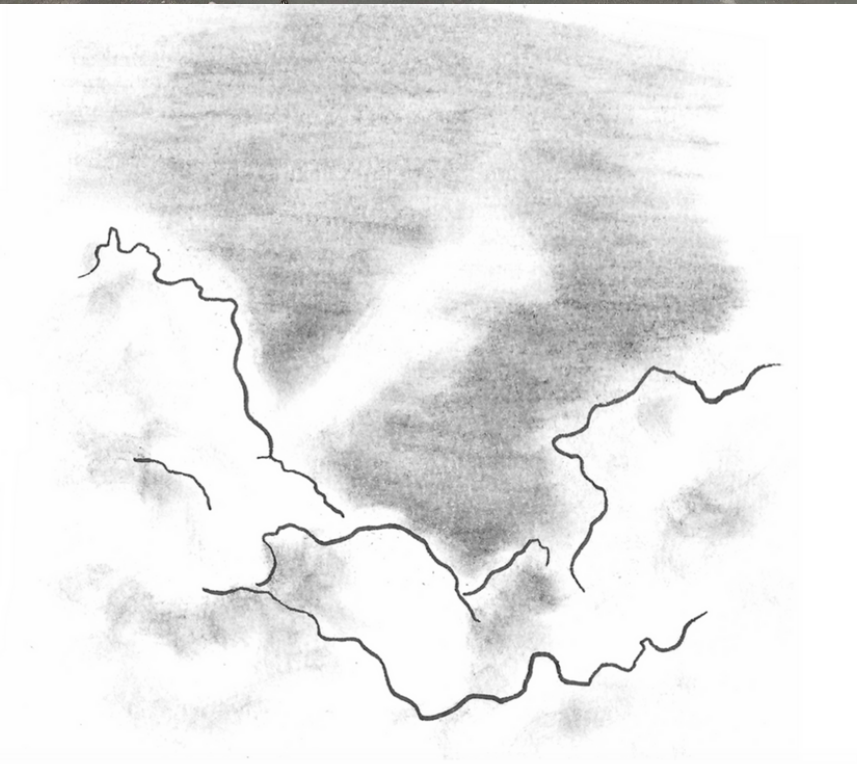
rise

Summer 2021

## LOOKING FORWARD

Re-entering life and faith together.





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# PASTOR'S CORNER

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## REV. ALAN DYER

You know that feeling you get right before you embark on a big trip? The car is fueled up. All the things you need are packed. All the planning is done. The kids are already in the back seat asking, “Are we there yet?”... I love the excitement of *that* moment – the moment right before you pull out of the driveway when all that is left is the anticipation of the journey ahead.



As it happens, that is exactly how I am feeling when I think about what is ahead for St. Simons Presbyterian Church. With the arrival of safe and effective vaccines and the completion of our renovation, there is a palpable sense of excitement as we begin to look ahead and dream about what is next for our church. Hence the theme for this edition of RISE: “Looking Forward.”

The pages that follow explore the myriad ways that God is already planning to use the people and ministry of St. Simons Presbyterian for Kingdom work in a post-COVID world. From reinvigorated worship inside our new sanctuary to mission trips to fresh opportunities for learning, care, relationship building, and impactful service, there is a very real sense that the best is still ahead.

My real hope though, is that all of this good ministry we are planning together might stir some dreaming of your own. What are the way you sense God calling St. Simons Presbyterian to utilize its people, spaces, and creative energy to be the hands and feet of Jesus Christ for each other and for our neighbors near and far? Or, said differently, when you think about the future for our church family, what is the thing you are most *looking forward to*? That is the question that I hope will guide and energize us for all that is still ahead.

And so the moment we have been anticipating for so long is finally at hand. God has given us all the things we need. The kids are in the backseat. The roadmap is written on each of our hearts. All that is left is to pull away and head into God’s future.

Are we there yet?

Peace,







# Help is on the Way

JOIN US THIS FALL FOR A  
MISSION TRIP TO NEWNAN, GA

BY: BRENDA HAUGHNEY

Plans are in the works for an ecumenical mission trip to work in Newnan, GA to assist with disaster recovery following a devastating tornado that touched down there in March 2021. We hope to confirm this location a little later in the year.

The folks who need help are usually uninsured or underinsured. This can be for many reasons but often it is because the house is paid for or inherited, and insurance is simply an expense the family cannot afford.

Can you imagine living in a small one-bedroom FEMA trailer for months while you are waiting for help? Maybe you are a single mom with three children who must continue going to school while



you work. Possibly, you were not making ends meet each month. And you are faced with a challenge now, bigger than you have ever faced before.

Or maybe you are senior citizen on a fixed income. You are alone and now need to find a way to supplement your income so you can pay for your home repairs. You have moved in with a family member temporarily. The home is full already and you feel out of place.

Regardless of the situations we run into, these are good people looking for answers while praying every day. When churches, non-profits, and volunteers come together to be the hands and feet of Christ, good things happen, answers are found, prayers are heard.

I have been on 20 mission trips, 7 international and 13 in the US, covering seven states. In every single case, good friends have been made and the people served are left better off by the building or rebuilding projects we take on.

Team members with skills of all levels are involved. A=Assistant/helper. B=Done this before. C=Chief/small team leader/teacher. The most important characteristic you can take along on a mission trip is flexibility. "Blessed are the flexible for they shall not be bent out of shape." - author unknown.

# INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING?

CONTACT BRENDA HAUGHNEY  
FOR ADDITIONAL INFO:

[brh1234@gmail.com](mailto:brh1234@gmail.com) ::: 704-641-2621





# Try Something New *This Year*

BY NAT SCOTT



Above: Try Something New outing at Masengale Park.



Above: Try Something New & BRIDGE Mission Program joint trip to Cumberland Island this past April.

Recently, the Congregational Life Committee met to plan our activities for the rest of 2021 and the beginning of 2022. As was the case for so much in 2020, we had to scrap most of our well-planned activities due to the pandemic. In fact, the last activity that we, the Try Something New Group, enjoyed together was our trip to Thomasville, Georgia just before the pandemic broke out. With an abundance of caution and out of a deep care for our membership, we opted to press the pause button and to live our lives together a bit closer to home.





*Above: Members & friends of St. Simons Presbyterian boarding ferry to Cumberland Island!*

Fortunately, this did not completely curtail our Congregational Life ministry! We found creative approaches to gathering ourselves, mainly outdoors, in the ways that the CDC described as safe. To that end, we enjoyed movies under a tent, Zoom Trivia nights, dinners on the veranda, bicycle outings, creation care walks, bird rambles with Lydia Thompson, beer tastings at Silver Bluff Brewery, porch dinners at local restaurants, and a beautiful visit to Cumberland Island. For more than a year now, we have masked up and washed our hands regularly in order to find connection with our dear friends.

Now, it seems as if we may finally be reaching the dim light at the end of the tunnel! In the last few weeks, there have been several meetings where everyone was fully vaccinated and we could all breathe a collective sigh of relief as we were able to unmask and see the huge smiles that have been hidden for many months. Now this is not saying, "...let's throw caution to the wind..." rather, it is to celebrate that we have carefully navigated this pandemic together! As we move ahead from this

place, we do so with that same abundance of caution that we began this journey with. And it is with this same sense of deep love and compassion that we have planned our activities going forward.

So, as we sat around our tables planning the next twelve months in ministry, there was a great deal of excitement. It was made easier still, as we had many activities already planned from our ministry calendar for the previous year. Even so, this planning event held a great deal of excitement for each of us. We all could feel our enthusiasm stirring as we put each date on the calendar with an eye towards building community through careful, thoughtful programming while looking out for the spiritual, emotional, intellectual, educational and social needs of our members.

May God continue to bless this ministry, and I hope to see your faces soon!



TRY SOMETHING NEW

# UPCOMING EVENTS

JULY

14 & 28 Family + Friends Bingo Night at Church

AUG

5 Meal with Friends at Barrier Island Brewery

20 Sip-n-Paint

SEPT

11 Alhambra - Sound of Music

OCT

2 Dinner at Stan's + Woodbine Opry

14 Richland Rum and Silver Bluff Tours

23 Tribute to Elton John at the Ritz Theatre

NOV

TBD Tour of Port Authority

TBD St Mary's Express

DEC

2 A Meal with Friends at Driftwood Bistro  
& Christmas Lights Tour on Jekyll

TBD Hofwyl Plantation Christmas Tour



# Under the Trees

**BY FRIEDA WARNER**

On Sunday, May 9, I watched as the moms, the dads and the grandparents spread out blankets or opened up beach chairs as their children settled down under a canopy of trees on the church lawn for Worship. The sun peeked through the branches and a gentle breeze whispered through the crowd. It was a beautiful Sunday morning in May, our last outdoor worship.

Thank goodness for the outdoors! These past few months would have been way more challenging without the beautiful place we live in as a backdrop for our worship and activities. As we marched through our calendar last fall and winter, we continued to offer most of our

traditional programs and activities in Children's Ministry... and almost all of them were outdoors. Whether under a tent blessing our school backpacks, on the Veranda creating Advent or Lent crafts, on the church front steps sharing the story of Jesus' birth, on the lawn marking our foreheads with ashes, gathering Easter eggs or spread out on blankets under the trees for Worship, we have spent a lot of meaningful time outdoors.

For the past few weeks, the children created their own books of The Gospel of John. As we searched for signs of Jesus in John's writing, it became clear that almost all of Jesus' ministry



occurred outdoors. Even the smallest children could flip through their artwork of stories in John and retell what they learned. There was Jesus turning water to wine at a wedding, talking to a woman at the well, feeding 5000 people a picnic of fish and bread, walking on water, healing an official's son from the next town exactly at one o'clock, putting mud on a blind man's eyes, calling to Lazarus to come out of the tomb, praying in a garden, dying on a cross, and eating breakfast on the beach with his friends. All stories of Jesus outdoors.

It has been a blessing to have much of our Children's Ministry outdoors. And now that we are able to meet indoors a bit more, I think I am going to miss our outdoor time. In fact, you might continue to find me spread out on a blanket under the trees with the children sharing the stories of Jesus.



# Summer/Fall Events

## Children's Ministry

June

8-10 VBS Rocky Railway  
21-25 Savannah Presbytery Camp

July

14 Family Fun Night/Bingo  
19-23 Worship & Art Camp  
28 Family Fun Night/Bingo

Aug

18 KidZ Crew Kickoff

Oct

24 Children Sunday  
27 Fall Festival

Nov

17 Advent Festival



# REFLECT









# WHAT A YEAR...

*A MISSION EXPANDING DURING A PANDEMIC.*

BY MADELYNNE RISI



*Above: BRIDGE Missions is a unique program focusing on ecological education, teaching students about the current environmental challenges and offering simple and effective ways to take care of God's creation in their daily lives.*

## BRIDGE MISSION PROGRAM

Every February for the past few years, the leaders of the BRIDGE Mission Program have had the privilege of presenting about our upcoming summer programs to the St. Simons Presbyterian Session. In February 2020, church member Rich Goeldner and I were doing just that in the Upper Room of the administrative building, which was comfortably crowded with familiar faces and eager ears to hear what changes we were proposing.

The vision we shared that night was to begin shifting the focus of BRIDGE to being entirely outside. Namely, instead of focusing solely on local

service projects, BRIDGE would start inviting participants out into the heat, the sand, the muggy buggy air of the South Georgia summer to learn about the call of Christ's followers to help nurture and care for God's creation. As we eagerly explained to our room of friends how the program would work, we were met with wide eyes and encouraging voices.

It was only one short month later though that we were tossed into a crazy new world and using words like "global pandemic," "quarantine pods," "isolation periods"; being told that we were safer gathering outdoors with our friends and family rather than



## BRIDGE

welcoming them into our homes or breaking bread together around the dinner table. In the following weeks we had to make some difficult decisions and several disappointing phone calls to the visiting groups that were lined up to help us pilot our new vision last summer. Having visitors share an indoor space together for several days just wasn't going to be an option.

We did, however, see this as an opportunity to change our audience. Instead of hosting groups from out of town, we decided to bring BRIDGE to you — to invite the entire St. Simons Presbyterian congregation to participate and see just how awesome this mission program really is. So that is what we did! BRIDGE hosted a week for families, a week with the SSPC youth and a week with the Try Something New Group! It was so wonderful to share the mission and vision of BRIDGE with each

of these small groups and feel like we were able to be together in a small but important way.

My hope and prayer is that this newly created space in BRIDGE Missions can continue to grow and flourish. More than anything we want everyone in our congregation to have an opportunity to get their hands dirty, sweaty, and salty while learning about this beautiful corner of God's creation that we are all privileged to call home. As we sink our feet into the mud and feel the heat of the sun on our neck, may we all remember together our calling to love, protect, and serve this Earth which God has entrusted to our care (Genesis 1:26).







RHONDA HAMBRIGHT, MUSIC DIRECTOR

# A DREAM IS A WISH YOUR HEART MAKES

*When conducting a piece of music, there are decisions to make. Not only do you need to choose the piece that is accessible to your singers and instrumentalists, you decide which elements of music that you are going to emphasize or do differently than marked in the music. By elements of music, I mean Form, Rhythm, Melody, Harmony, Tempo, Timbre, Dynamics, and Texture. What are the elements that will bring out the beauty of the piece? How should they be brought out? When planning the renovation, the building committee had the basic outline of the “piece.” However, we were the composers also. Many decisions went into the planning process and into the building process.*

*There were some decisions that had to be changed to work with the entire plan – and sometimes the building and its structure told us what needed to be done. It’s still a work in progress as the details get filled in and we live into the space.*





Every music director that I know has changed their “digs” at their church from the music library, the choir room, and on into the sanctuary choir loft. They know what works for themselves as conductors or organists and what works for their various music groups. When I got here in 2008, I was aware of the church building because I had been involved in one way or another at this church since 1984. Some choir members told me they could no longer climb the high attic stairs, so they would be quitting choir. I wasn’t having that – thus began the numerous changes that the music ministry would go through in order to serve its members safely and well. Lately, we have been nomads – moving up and downstairs, outside and off-campus. It’s been an adventure! I feel grateful that because of our mild weather, we have been able to have a small choir outdoors. However, being indoors lately has been a great reward to us.

It’s rare when dreams come true, but I can say that everything that I imagined that the church building could be has happened! Here are highlights for us: 1) The ramp going up to the chancel area has allowed anyone that has trouble using stairs to access the chancel area. 2) Choir and instrumentalists fit comfortably in the loft space. 3) All furniture is moveable on the chancel. 4) The 7’ Steinway B Grand Piano and the Schantz Organ Console fit well in the space and are both moveable. 5) The aisles are wider on the sides of the church, allowing room for a chorus to stand in them and surround the congregation. 6) The acoustics (all hard surfaces) allow for greater blending of voices in the choir and in the congregation

7) The Organ has an antiphonal division (the area in the back above the door behind the grille doors) and it is raised up off the floor and above our heads allowing the organ to “speak” in normal tones. (see me for further explanation, organs do not talk)

8) The lighting in the entire sanctuary allows us to see much better and 9) the chairs are very comfortable.

So - what does this mean for the music ministry? It means that we can have more people in the Chancel Choir Loft once the pandemic lifts and/or we feel safe to do so. I’m dreaming up special worship services, hymn festivals, sponsoring workshops for choirs or bells, hosting orchestras and instrumental groups for concerts, and other concerts in addition to the wildly successful Island Concert Association.

The 75th anniversary celebration of our great church will start on September 26, 2021. A planning committee has been formed, so make it known that you would like to contribute your memories or your time and talents to this opportunity to serve. The plan is to celebrate the ministries of our church all year long. Those families that began this church dreamed of the future for their community. I’d say that quite a few dreams came true. As we look toward the future, keeping in mind those dreams and the strong faith that supported them will continue to bring the love and joy of Christ into our community and world.



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ST. SIMONS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

# covid 19 community relief fund

By Molly Macaulay

We hear it. We pray it. We endeavor to embody it in our daily lives. St. Simons Presbyterian Church strives to be the hands and feet of Jesus Christ. Since March 2020, it is that very striving that has been the mission of our congregation's COVID19 Community Relief Fund (CCRF). The fund began as an effort to respond tangibly to individuals and families caught in COVID's wicked web of relentless financial hardship. And because of your generosity we have to-date been able to distribute nearly \$165,000 in individual grants to individuals and families here in Glynn County who are struggling through no fault of their own.

As COVID raged on into 2021, the CCRF team came to a crossroad. Yes, the team would continue to distribute funds to new applicants, but we wondered about our original grant recipients. How are they doing now? Is life any different? These would be the same folks who bared their souls and deepest doubts to us almost a year ago – people we knew only through an online application but ones we thought about regularly and prayed for. We had heard their private, heartfelt stories, unfathomed fear, and desperate appeals for prayers — people who were victims of a pandemic but also people who are precious children of God just like us.

The CCRF team decided to be the hands and feet of Christ by boldly circling back to these

folks as a sign of our continuing concern and love for them as brothers and sisters in Christ. Thus, a new phase in our efforts began in February 2021. The CCRF team had no clue where this leap of faith might lead or what the response might be, but we did know that God had entrusted us to listen, to love unconditionally, and to walk with others – in other words, to begin building relationships that go beyond a single check. Presently the team is reaching out to each original recipient with a brief questionnaire. After receiving and reading their replies, the team responds with a personal email and an additional grant if needed.

To be the hands and feet of Christ is to walk side-by-side through life's ups and downs and to accept and love one another unconditionally. We do that through our actions; by keeping in touch, by distributing food from our food pantry, or by inviting folks to worship with us. The CCRF Team is humbled by the endless opportunities to serve others, and we look forward to the Holy Spirit leading us as we continue to live together in a hurting world.

We invite you to be in prayer for all of our brothers and sisters in Christ who have received relief funds and especially for those who are still struggling in our midst.



# COVID-19 GRANT RECIPIENTS SAY THANK YOU

- *"The grant was a blessing. It helped my family through a very difficult time. Without it we would have lost power. Thank you so much."*
- *"Y'all are a very big help, not only to me but also to others who are facing challenges with COVID-19. I really do appreciate the help that you have given me and my family over this past year."*
- *"I am so thankful for this relief grant. Helped a lot with my children. Thank God for hands and mind that contribute to this great cause. Very Grateful."*
- *"The grant helped me pay my past due water bill and I was able to put some on my lights also. I want to thank you all so much."*
- *"It helped tremendously as I was able to pay a few bills and provide food for my family. I am forever grateful for the grant."*
- *"It helped me get through the pandemic and saved me from hunger and from being homeless. It was a heaven sent relief."*
- *"It was a blessing for me. I had a chance to pay a couple of bills. And it help me relief some of the stress. Thank you!"*
- *"This grant helped me so much with my financial needs at the time. I was not able to work as much due to COVID-19 (I serve tables) and this money helped me pay my electricity bill! I am so so so grateful and the process wasn't daunting."*
- *"The St. Simons COVID-19 relief grant helped me a lot and I was so grateful. It allowed me the ability to catch up on pass due bills and help also pay half of my rent. The grant was money I didn't have and it helped me keep my utilities on for the sake of me and my kids."*



# this year

has been breath-taking.

Lent of 2020 was when we met to face the ritual of our mortality: ashes on the forehead. "Dust to dust," the pastors said to every set of eyes, young and old.

And then the spinning. The shutting down, the skeletal grocery store shelves, the panicked news reports, the homeschooling. Home workout equipment was sold out, masks were being hand sewn by those who could find elastic since the n95s were saved for medical staff.

We recorded sermons and celebrated a bizarre Easter where church sanctuaries all over the world remained as empty as the tomb. Zoom emerged; at first a headache with unmuted mics and background distractions. But we limped along, grateful for smiles in little boxes all over the screen – boxes of faces we missed and community we ached for.

And somehow, in the cracks of the panic and worry, there were moments that took our breath away. Life was hanging in a weird limbo – all sense of time fell away as the days started to bleed into each other and the Coronavirus case charts became a measure of the passing of the weeks.

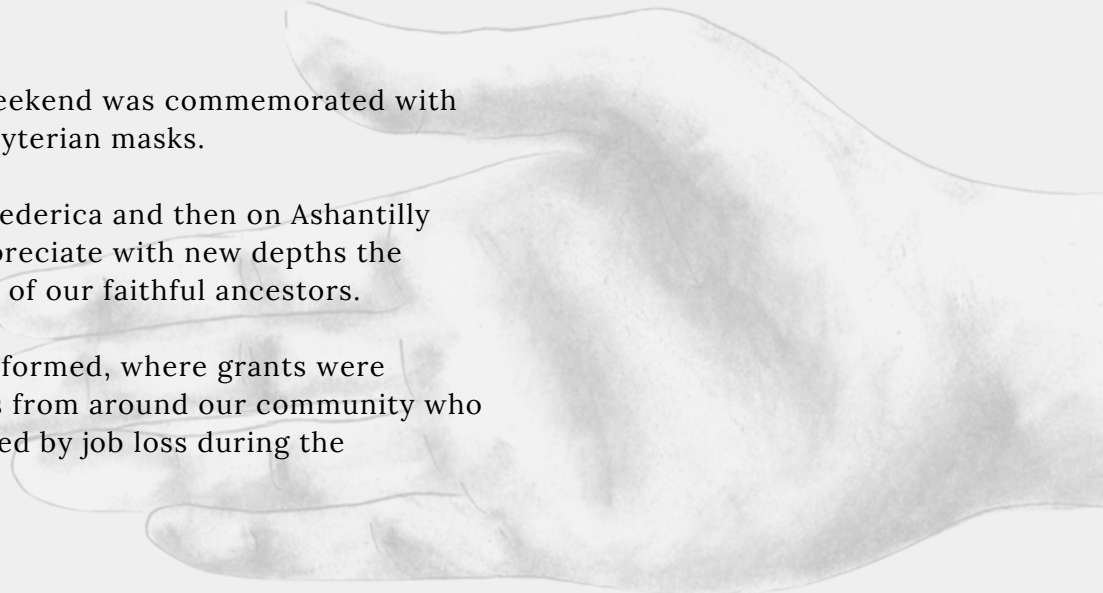
By Kate Buckley

But in the great pause, we started to hear with fresh ears and see with fresh eyes the birds were singing; the grass growing; the ocean lapped at the shoreline; the mountains sat in their majestic thrones, anchors of steadfastness.

# Creativity flourished.

## New ministries sprang up at St. Simons Presbyterian Church

- Neighborhood Care Coordinators volunteered to check in on fellow church members with calls and groceries.
- Hands and Heart ministry knitted, quilted, and crocheted soft blankets to deliver to the lonely, isolated, or sick as a tangible reminder of the warmth and comfort of God.
- PresbyPal paired children (newly at-home and bored) with older church members to correspond via snail mail; making connections while gathering wasn't possible.
- Blessing cards were our spiritual discipline during a fall sermon series on the Beatitudes; sending love and encouragement outwards to friends, neighbors, and strangers.
- Memorial Garden tributes helped us to remember and honor those who passed away in our church while funerals were unsafe. Plaques and plants with handmade crosses became a place for loved ones to sit with their grief on sacred soil.
- Church anniversary weekend was commemorated with black St. Simons Presbyterian masks.
- Outdoor worship at Frederica and then on Ashantilly lawn allowed us to appreciate with new depths the tabernacle community of our faithful ancestors.
- Covid Relief Fund was formed, where grants were allocated to applicants from around our community who were financially affected by job loss during the pandemic.

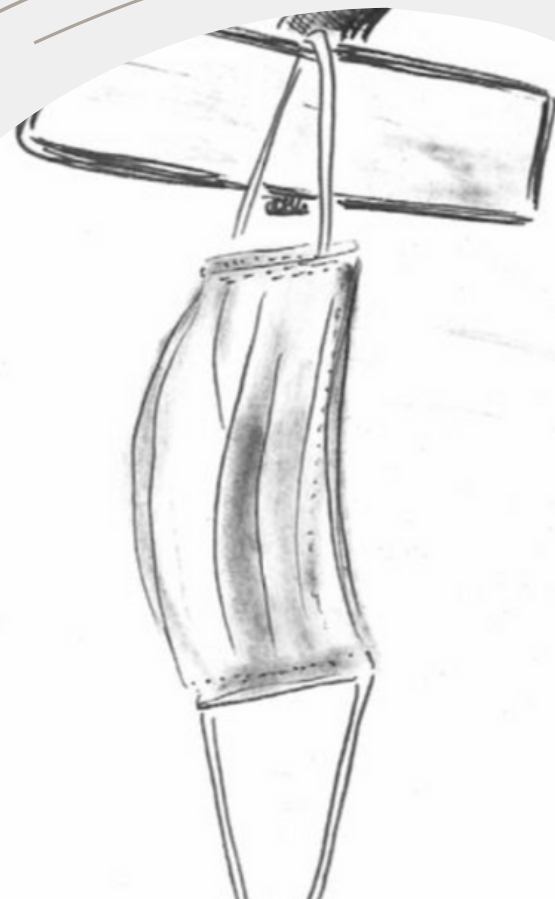




There was lots of sickness. Coughing, fever, isolation and terror. There were many who took their final breath. And the rest of us have experienced moments in the midst of turmoil that took our own breath away. It struck me recently that breath-taking moments are really what we live for as followers of Christ. Breathtaking moments are when we exhale enough to fully drain our lungs, to live with a sense of awe at what we are beholding, and to inhale deeply of fresh, new air. The exhale and the taking away of breath makes room for breath-giving. We have experienced the best sorts of breathtaking moments and the very worst ones this past year. Our little church family has shown resilience and experienced renewal.

We worship a God who declares new life after death; a God who insists on fresh starts for the otherwise lost and forsaken; a God who takes our breath away at the end of life, but when we are really paying attention, takes our breath away at so many moments along the way. "My prayer for us moving into a post-pandemic existence is to remember the sparkling beauty of the now, to not forget that a slower pace carries the weight and wonder of the divine, to appreciate the creativity of God's love from a distance, and to cherish the treasure that is the ability to connect in person with our church family: hugs, tears, laughter, and holding real live hands in prayer.

blessed be the day  
when the child is grown  
and she looks in the rearview  
to find a story to tell the little ones  
and she remembers the time  
when everything stopped  
and hung there  
and it was terrible and heartbreaking  
and it was fertile and vibrant  
and the whole world had a chance  
to sort priorities and to choose  
what matters most





# YOUTH

## SUMMER SCHEDULE

**JUNE 6:** Youth Service Project with KGIB (marsh clean up followed by dinner out on the island) *Contact: Madelynne Risi*

**JUNE 21-24:** Savannah Presbytery Camp (information and registration on church website, register ASAP)

**JUNE 27:** Beach Cookout (kayaks and paddle boards at Gould's Inlet followed by dinner at the Head's Home) *Contact: Alan Dyer*

**JUNE 16-18:** Youth Bridge Mission Excursion (boating and kayaking adventure)  
*Contact: Madelynne Risi*

**AUGUST 1:** TopGolf in Jacksonville (lunch followed by an afternoon of "golfing" and fellowship)  
*Contact: Alan Dyer*

**AUGUST 15:** Fall Kick Off Scavenger Hunt!





**Anniversary Weekend**


# **Celebrating 75 Years**

**OF BEING THE HANDS &  
FEET OF JESUS CHRIST IN  
GLYNN COUNTY & BEYOND**

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**September 24-26, 2021**

**More Details to Come!**

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