

RISE

ST. SIMONS
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

GIVING

COVID19 COMMUNITY
RELIEF FUND

A discussion with member, Tate Simpson, on the origin of CCRF & how it has changed his life as well as the lives of many in our community.

HANDS & HEARTS

A MINISTRY BORN IN
THE TIME OF COVID

A gift for creatives, huggers, and
the homebound.

WORSHIP

THROUGH THE LENS

Take a look behind the scenes of
online worship.

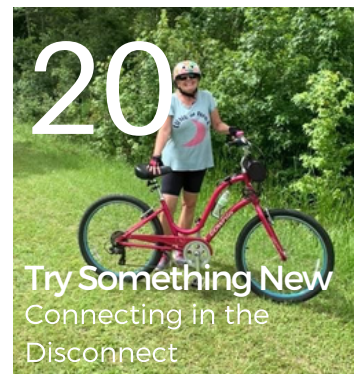
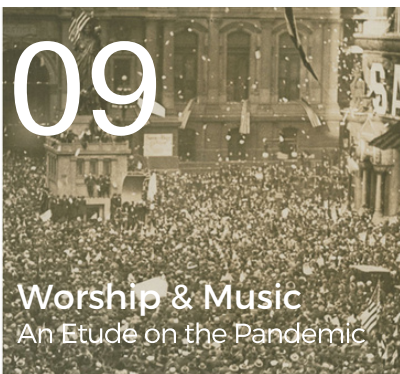
Fall/Winter 2020

Issue 13

RISE

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RISE
Saint Simons
Presbyterian Church



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PASTOR'S CORNER



Whirlwind

If I were to describe 2020 in one word, that would be it: Whirlwind.

On the one hand, this year has been a whirlwind of disruption and disarray. Some of us have felt that deep unsettling feeling in our stomachs as we anxiously wait to see if the symptoms develop or worsen. Others have spent hours by the phone praying for a call from the nursing station at the hospital caring for our loved one. We have watched events unfold that lay bare the deep pain of too many of our neighbors and the deep divisions and injustice that exist across our nation and world. And all of us have felt the effects of isolation and interruption to those routines and relationships that normally fill us with life and that we add life to.

But there has also been another kind of whirlwind moving in our midst. As I think back on this year, the images that come most clearly to my mind are not those of sickness and despair. Instead, what I see are the faces and places that the Holy Spirit has blown our church towards. The pages of this edition of the

Rise Magazine are, in fact, a testimony of sorts to the whirlwind of ministry that God has been leading our congregation in as we have sought to provide for the worship, care, and tangible needs of those most in need during these “upside down” times. From blankets and quilts to phone calls and food drop-offs to direct relief grants, we have sought to be the hands and feet of Jesus Christ together.

It is an especially appropriate testimony for us to reflect upon as we sit here at the beginning of Advent, which is the season on the church calendar set aside for watching and waiting. While the whirlwinds of our world at present are not likely to quiet anytime soon, this is a time for us to listen a little closer for that not so distant sound, that faint cry, that glorious noise harkening the arrival of an utterly different kind of whirlwind: one of grace, healing, and eternal life.

With hope and expectation,

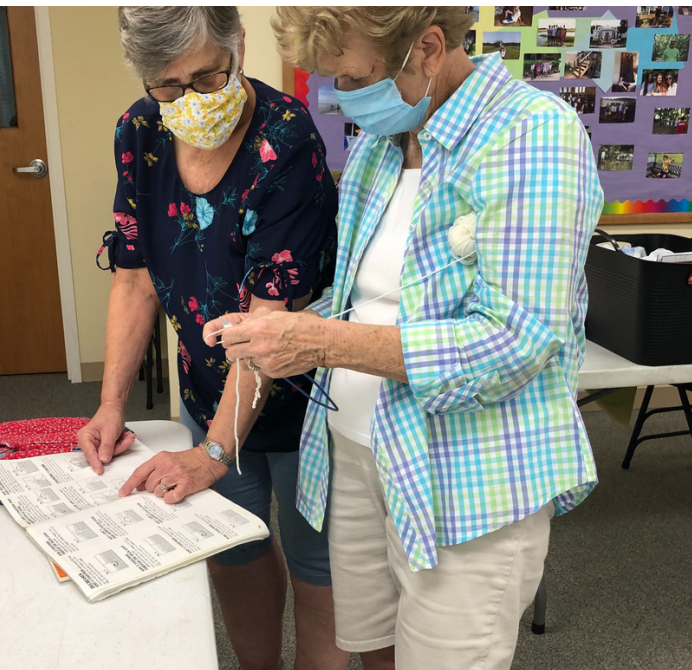
PEOPLE HUGGERS

By Nancy Harper

On July 8, 2020 I met at the church with Leslie McCracken and Anne Aspinwall. Leslie had been in discussion with some church members. One in particular, Fred Griffith, said that the pandemic and resulting quarantine had left him feeling so sad and almost depressed. He could no longer hug people! Hugging was Fred's way of giving and receiving love. Leslie was so distraught when she heard others feeling the same way that she decided to do something about it. She hoped to order blankets for those members of the church who were alone either at home or in nursing homes. At our meeting I proposed organizing members of the church who could sew, crochet or knit rather than

ordering the blankets. I felt that we would be able to use the talents of some very creative church members to produce lap blankets & quilts. Anne and Leslie were very supportive of this suggestion and produced the questionnaires in our online newsletter to see who might want to participate.

On Friday, July 10 we had a Zoom meeting that produced ten women who wanted to be involved! Currently we have fifteen members! The church has supported us meeting socially distanced and with masks in the youth suite classroom. We meet every two weeks to work together, share ideas, have a show-and-tell of



completed projects and take on other tasks that help the community (ironing school logos onto masks). To date we have delivered 56 lap blankets & quilts to members of our congregation!

I know that those receiving the blankets or quilts are happy and feel the love and warmth of the church. I know this because we receive so many thank-you-notes and calls. However, there is so much more to this ministry. The members of the Hands and Heart Ministry have benefited so much by sharing stories, patterns, and getting to know each other while they make the quilts/lap blankets. Members new to the area and our church have a place to meet others. They feel the love of our church too! Those delivering the quilts have been able to sit for hours and learn more about church members. Members of the ministry are cultivating new friendships and rekindling old ones. What started off as a way to remember members who are alone and not able to express love due to social distancing, illness, and/or death has actually touched so many more aspects of the lives of our church members than we originally expected of it. This ministry is a win-win situation for not only the person receiving the lap quilt or blanket but also for the person creating it!

Kate Buckley has designed a handout paper that goes along with each lap quilt/blanket created by our ministry. It definitely sums up the fact that this ministry is linked together by love. "As Christians, we take our nod from God, the ultimate Creator, knitter and weaver who dreams us up and then spends our lives growing us and molding us and shaping us into a beautiful tapestry of witness to eternal love." The lap quilt/blanket lets its soft warmth remind our church members of how powerfully God loves them and how dearly St. Simons Presbyterian loves them.



**"I AM SO BLESSED TO
GROW IN MY FAITH
AND HUMBLLED TO BE
A PART OF THIS
NEWLY CREATED
MINISTRY."**

- Nancy Harper

THE PROOF IS IN THE STITCHING

BY FRED GRIFFITH

I was standing on the street in Highlands, NC basking in the zero humidity of a rather comfortable 80 degree day in July. Highlands is our “go to” space to get away and fortunately my grandfather had the foresight to build a home for himself back in the late 40’s that I can’t imagine trying to build or buy today. Anyway, as I stood there grateful for the precautions the little town was taking to keep everyone safe from the Worldwide Pandemic of 2020 and extremely happy that I was not baking on St. Simons Island, my phone rang. The amazing part is that I heard it, and that I was not the least bit interested in having it on my person. So answering it was not an option, particularly since I didn’t recognize the number.

I’m sure any of you reading this get all kinds of calls on your phone. And you wonder how in the world did they get my number, but then I do have it listed on several websites and it is connected to sites that people call and ask for information about the Golden Isles. But I was in Highlands with my family and the last several months of navigating a pandemic that had basically already destroyed two of my businesses, I had reason to be feeling sorry for myself,



especially since the only calls I had been taking were usually bad news. As it was a local 912 number I decided, well... some little voice in my head decided, to answer it. The voice of an angel was on the other end.

"Fred, this is Nancy Harper and I’m sitting in your driveway and it looks like you are here but no one will answer the door. Are you okay?"

After a chuckle I related to Nancy that indeed we were not there and were out of town. She responded that she had a gift she wished to leave with me and what should she do? My first reaction was, "why in the world would someone have a gift for me and why now?"

Quickly getting over that, I advised her to leave it on our back doorstep as someone was checking on the house, our cat, guinea pig, and fish tank, and oh, by the way, don't pet the cat...she bites!

Our return home was uneventful and we were grateful for the break before my wife Melissa started back to work. We entered the house and there on our dining room table was the gift that Nancy had left and our house-watcher had brought in from the stoop. Upon opening it and reading the note that accompanied it, I was floored. Before me was a beautiful hand-stitched comforter created by one of my favorite church members, Sally Baldwin, and I was so very humbled. I wasn't worthy and what possessed this charming woman to create this for me???

My most profound takeaway from this gift was that there are angels among us and despite my cavalier attitude about prayer, voices in my head, and choices and events created everyday to ensure we are listening to the words of a higher spirit, "stuff" still happens that makes me say, "WOW!" Our Hands and Heart ministry of our church, a group conceived by our own Leslie McCracken, is made up of church members reaching out to other church members through their respective hands and hearts. They are more than hands and heart. They are our WOW. Just WOW! Thank you is not enough from this very grateful heart. We, and you, are blessed.





Caring For Our Community in a Time of Crisis

AN INTERVIEW WITH TATE SIMPSON ON THE CREATION OF
THE SSPC COVID-19 COMMUNITY RELIEF FUND

HOW DID THE IDEA FOR THIS FUND COME ABOUT?

We heard various stories of individuals and families being financially impacted by COVID-19. We felt compelled to assist as many as possible. Although we understood that the need could possibly outreach our available resources, we trusted in God's word. 1 Peter 4:10 "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in various forms."

We launched Phase 1 in early May '20. We received over 380 grant applications and approved over 238 (63%) applications totaling over \$109,000 in financial assistance. All applicants are required to provide supporting documentation. Furloughed workers must provide proof of furlough and proof of employment prior to COVID-19 outbreak. During Phase 1 we awarded qualified applicants with children \$500 and qualified applicants without children \$250. With such a high demand we decided to initiate Phase 2. Taking our key learnings from Phase 1, we revised the grant awards to \$250 per qualifying individuals or families; this allowed the team to award more

much-needed financial assistance. Through early October we've received 141 grant applications and approved 79 (56%) grants totaling \$20,350.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF CCRF?

The COVID-19 Pandemic Community Relief Fund was established to provide emergency financial assistance to individuals and families in Glynn County, Georgia who have been financially impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Any full-time resident of Glynn County is eligible to apply for a cash grant from this fund if they meet any of the following criteria:

1. Laid off or furloughed from their job due to the COVID-19 outbreak.
2. Experiencing financial hardship as a result of a COVID-19 diagnosis or hospitalization (medical bills, income loss, etc.)
3. Self-employed or small business owners experiencing financial hardship due to significant decline in business and/or loss of customers.
4. Loss of income due to children being home or daycare being closed.

HOW HAS BEING ON THIS COMMITTEE CHANGED YOU?

Serving on the COVID-19 Community Relief Team has opened my eyes and heart to how many people in Glynn County are struggling to meet their everyday expenses such as food, rent, utilities, car payment etc. Fortunately, our COVID Community Relief Team consists of 9 thoughtful and caring individuals committed to helping those families and individuals impacted by COVID-19.

We have specific criteria that we look for when reviewing grant applications; however, when we have an application that does not meet all of the criteria, it is difficult to say no. Fortunately, for those "too close to call" applications we get assistance from either Alan or Annie, which is very helpful and much appreciated. Serving on the SSPC COVID Community Relief

Fund Team has given me a greater appreciation of the struggles that many residents of Glynn County and beyond face on a daily basis. When we first launched the COVID Community Relief Fund I wondered, "what impact could either a \$500 or \$250 grant have?" Now after 6 months and having the opportunity to receive comments from some of the grant recipients, I'm convinced that we've assisted in their financial situation.

AMOUNT RAISED
\$182K

RELIEF GRANTS
DISTRIBUTED
\$132K

TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS
IMPACTED
322

HOW HAS THE RELIEF FUND CHANGED THE LIVES OF OTHERS?

When we launched the SSPC COVID Community Relief Fund, we discussed possible options on how to get the word out about our grant application process. What we learned was that "word of mouth" worked wonderfully. The number of grant applications continued to grow during Phase 1 and into Phase 2. When we receive a follow-up email from an applicant expressing their sincere appreciation for their grant, we know that we've made a positive impact.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

If you know someone in financial need as a result of the pandemic, please send them to sspres.org/relief-fund.

MEMBERS OF THE COVID-19 RELIEF FUND COMMITTEE MEET VIA ZOOM





AN ETUDE ON THE PANDEMIC

WRITTEN BY RHONDA HAMBRIGHT
DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

The music studio in my home is the former dining/living room of the house. There are large windows in the front. On the inside there is a set of "outdoor" French doors that help mute the sound coming out or in. We recently installed bookcases to house the music that I have collected over the years. They are full and groaning under the weight of many treasured

music books and textbooks about music. I often get calls to become the repository for someone's music after they no longer need it or if they pass away, so there is quite a bit that I have been given and quite a bit that I have purchased. I think most lifelong musicians could say the same thing.

PHOTO CREDIT: UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO, VIA HATHITRUST


Other things that go along with the music given to me are magazines about music. While cleaning out earlier this year, I found issues of *The Etude*. The *Etude* music magazine was published from 1883-1957 and was primarily an aid for music teachers. Articles about teaching technique, what was going on in the world of music, ads, music samples, and artists working at the time fill the pages that are graced with a collectible artistic cover about the theme of the issue. I have random issues as early as October 1917 and as late as March 1946. I think someone found them in an upstairs room of an old building in Brunswick. Hoping to find advice and tips for musicians during this time, I immediately thought that I would look at the magazines around the outbreak of the Spanish influenza of 1918.

I scoured the *Etude* magazines from that time and found just one paragraph about the pandemic other than the death notices of well-known musicians who succumbed to the influenza epidemic. Here is the clip from the December 1918 edition: "The havoc of the scourge of influenza, which has affected all lines of business, did not let music escape. Happily, as we are going to press, this "last straw" to a very trying year is now broken in most parts of the country. Teachers and students will simply have to work overtime to make up for the hours lost. It can be done if you will make the effort.

Furthermore, teaching terms should voluntarily be extended at least one month next June to avoid a huge loss in American musical education". -*The Etude*, December 1918. Makes you think about all education, doesn't it?

This paragraph spoke too soon apparently. Armistice day was on November 11, 1918 and with the end of the war, many thought that the flu was over as well. Massive celebrations, Sunday sings, and most of cultural life continued as the flu experienced a third wave of infection in January 1919. Many of the gatherings became "super-spreader" events, as some areas didn't follow the recommended protocol that is very similar to the information today's pandemic precautions contain.

NO DANGER OF INFLUENZA.



Right now is the time to appreciate the joys of a New Edison. You can attend concerts of grand opera, light opera, sacred music or the fine old songs without running any risk of contracting influenza. The New Edison, "The Phonograph with a Soul," actually reproduces the human voice so that you can not tell the difference between the real and the re-created. The New Edison will be worth the price for entertainment in your home during the influenza quarantine on public musicales and social gatherings. Have an Edison concert in your home.

"You Will Find It At"

Morell Tilson & Sons.

Telephone Main 405.

New York City never stopped performances, replacing sick performers with healthy ones. Today, because we know more about the transmission of diseases as a whole, and we have the drugs and tools to heal and discover more, we are able to protect ourselves to a degree. Penicillin was discovered in 1928 but not ready for widespread distribution until 1943 and later! If we had just known more back in 1918, perhaps so many people would not have become ill or perished as a result. In all of the periodicals that I scanned, news of World War I was of more importance at the time and influenza was a common illness. Also, the influenza epidemic wasn't a huge news event due to wartime press censorship. Look up the 1918 Sedition Act. People were afraid of breaking the law and harming the war effort, not to mention communication was nowhere near what it is today. I had hoped to find information about the world of music at the time in the *Etude*, but everything looks like "business as usual." The *Musical Courier* had



more information about cancelled tours and concerts. There was even an ad about buying a phonograph and listening to concerts with no threat of exposure. I encourage you to read more about this pandemic – it really looks like the same problems existed then as we have now.

Today, in spite of lots of work stoppage in the field of music, especially church music, we have gone on to continue to find a way to make music safely. The many ways that musicians, dancers, actors, and artists have adapted to this disease have been amazing! Virtual choirs have popped up everywhere. Instrumental groups in churches are on the upswing. Outdoor rehearsals and concerts have increased. You can find “how-to” webinars to attend on any given day showing you ways to adapt to the “new normal.” Musicians are adaptive humans at their very best. We deal with many obstacles that others don’t even think about. It begins with the instrument itself, which can be inferior in some cases. Other things that can be (things to complain about) detrimental: the chair that you are sitting in, the room that the program is in – temperature, room to play, acoustics, any unusual odors present such as mold, the weather (including barometric pressure!), your general mood, the general mood of your fellow musicians, the conductor or director, the accompanist, the difficulty level of music, the abilities of your fellow musicians, COVID, and the list can go on and on.....(I ended up laughing out loud at the continuing list of negatives or excuses that musicians use all the time to make up for technical skill). Some of these excuses are legit, however, and make a huge difference in the performance outcome.

I think that you can say that we are grateful now to be singing or playing at all in any circumstance. Gratitude is a good thing. It helps us to become humble, which is what the Lord requires of us.

I’m not saying that this or any pandemic was necessary for us to find thankfulness. I am saying that we can find good in all things, no matter how small. It becomes harder to find that good in the sight of so much grieving and loss, but we can find it if we look hard enough. I am grateful for any music that we can make and share with the congregation.

In light of all of this, I am excited about the renovation of our sanctuary. I can already feel the vibrancy of how the music will surround you – not only the instruments, but the sound of voices. We may not be able to raise our voices to the rafters for a while, but won’t it be a glorious sound when we do? The old hymn says, “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, sweetest name I know. Fills my every longing, keeps me singing as I go.” (There’s Within My Heart a Melody) The poetry of hymns has deep theological meaning and comforting messages so keep singing the hymns of faith in your home as you go about your chores. You’ll feel better and have gratitude in your heart for the small mercies in life. We all want to be ready when it’s time...

Sources:

NCBI – Emerging Infectious Diseases
 Pandemic 1918 – Book Review
 The Flu in the United States – Becky Little
 How Does a Pandemic End? – Olivia B. Waxman
 Outbreak: Pandemic Strikes, Robert Kessler
 Armistice Day
 The 1918 Pandemic’s Impact on Music?
 Surprisingly Little – William Robin
 The Etude – November 1918, December 1918, and January 1918 issues

PRESBY-PAL MINISTRY

Connecting Generations

WRITTEN BY FRIEDA WARNER

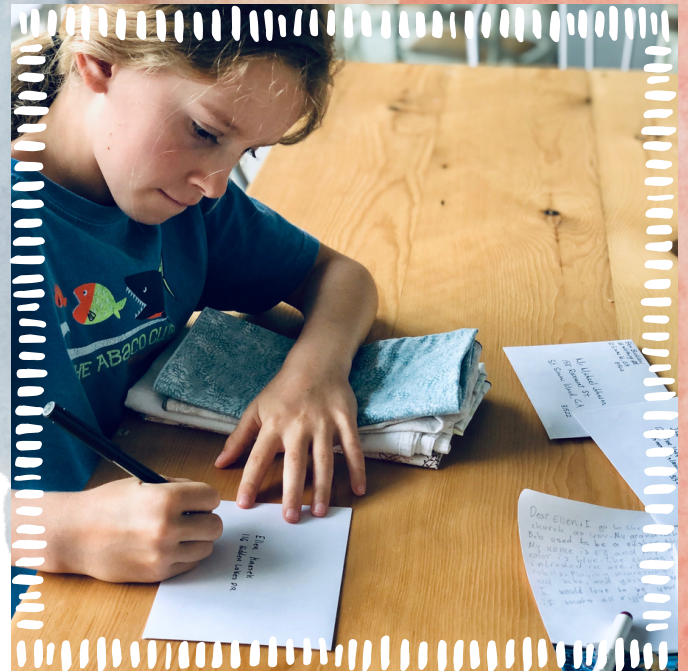
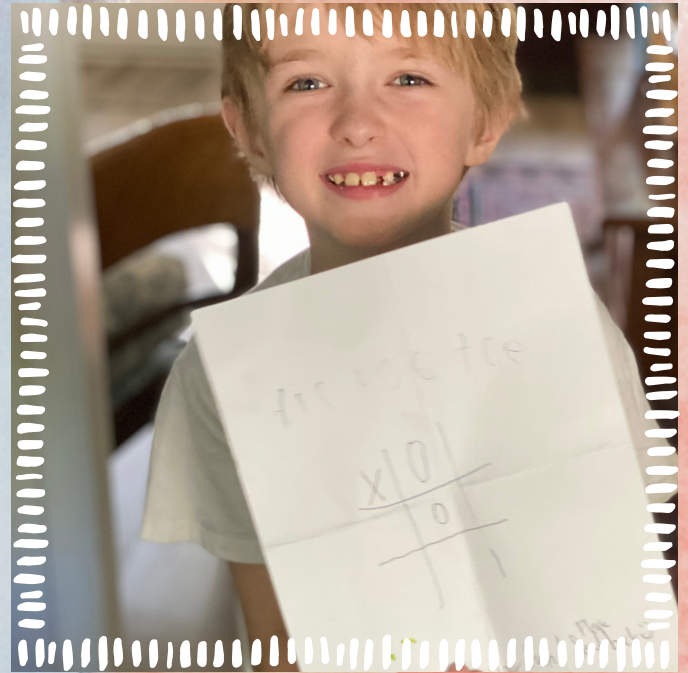
It's almost difficult to remember the carefree days before the pandemic! By late March, when church activities were postponed and schools started to close, we all realized that 2020 was going to be a very different year. As the unexpected challenges piled on us, I quoted Dolly Parton (yes, Dolly!) in my April 2, 2020, newsletter to the families that read:

"We cannot direct the wind, but we can
adjust the sails...."

Then Palm Sunday and Easter services were canceled! We knew we needed to explore creative ways to keep everyone connected to church and to each other. It was time to "adjust the sails!" How could we keep our children creatively busy at home? What could we do to keep in touch with our older church members?

How could we brighten someone's day while maintaining physical distance? Children's Ministry and Congregational Care teamed up, and the Presby-Pal Ministry was born!

Who doesn't love to get a REAL handwritten letter in the mailbox? Presby-Pal matched children with an older church member as pen pals. It was manna in the mail! Just as God provided manna (food) to the Israelites in the wilderness, Presby-Pals provided "social" nourishment in a time of "social" distance.



Presby-Pal partners wrote back and forth during the Spring and Summer. Some even continue writing now! Pictures were drawn, tic tac toe played, prayers were sent and questions were answered as manna notes arrived in the mailboxes.

Who knew that the pandemic would create special relationships between some of our youngest and oldest? Thank you, Dolly, for encouraging words! And thank you to the SSPC Presby-Pals who delivered smiles and hugs in a challenging time.

NOVEMBER 2020

SANCTUARY & ASHANTILLY WING RENOVATION UPDATE





The work is not yet done but the finish line is in sight. Although our Sanctuary and Ashantilly Wing are still very much a construction zone with plenty of dust, equipment, and remaining tasks to be accomplished, it is beginning to feel more and more like the completed vision we set out to realize when this project began over twelve months ago.

The big question we know is on everyone's mind is, "When will it be done?" Currently, the contractor hopes to complete their work sometime in December, which will be followed by the installation of our organ in January. This means that the earliest we expect the renovation to be fully complete is likely late-January or early-February 2021.

Thank you for your continued prayers, words of encouragement, and support of this important project in the life of our congregation. Together, we are building a strong foundation for the future worship and ministry of St. Simons Presbyterian in our community and beyond.



worship THROUGH THE LENS

BY ADA OWENS

On the afternoon of Saturday, March 14, Alan, Annie and I gathered together in our bare-bones sanctuary with a makeshift congregation of studs and nails watching as we stumbled into our first-ever attempt at online worship. Our intentions were good, but we had no clue what we were doing! To top it off, the week leading up to this moment had shaken our emotions like dice and then tossed them in every direction, leaving us with that unbearable feeling of simply not knowing. Putting all of the upheaval on the back burner, we set up our equipment (which only consisted of one DSLR camera), and for the first time in my life I squinted through the lens of my camera and heard myself saying the word, "action". That was the beginning of the next seven months of our lives.

I'm a planner. I have three young boys (ages 7, 4, and 2), a full-time job here at our beloved church, and I help my husband manage our restaurant, Cj's, on the side. Of course I'm completely aware of how chaotic my life already looked pre-pandemic, but there has always been a method to the madness. A silent checklist in my head and a loud (intentionally obnoxious) one on my phone that helps to keep my life in order. Always planning. But on the afternoon of March 15, there was no plan. I wasn't even sure where to begin.



My kids were no longer in school, my husband and I were torn trying to make tough decisions for our restaurant, help from the grandparents was now supplied through a tablet (not as helpful!), and now I'd deemed myself a video producer/editor, when I honestly wasn't even sure that I'd properly hit the record button on my camera as Alan began speaking. But while I sat on the concrete floor of our sanctuary with my eyes fixated on the lens, I finally began to hear Alan's words and they spoke to my soul.

In the following weeks I committed myself to learning the art of videography. The basics of it, at least. The worship videos I began making were like puzzles, except the shape of each piece needs to be clipped, cropped, zoomed, blurred, and filtered before it can be placed alongside its counterpart, with a dash of crossfading at the seams. Say what?! Yeah, that's my lingo now. Thanks 2020. And I was enjoying it. Having the opportunity to brainstorm with Alan and Annie on the direction of their sermons and then trying to tie it together with coordinating imagery or creating a visual story to place in-between-the-lines was an honor. It lit a creative spark within me that I never knew before. Not to mention, I'm now able to confirm for us all that Alan and Annie are both just as human and flawed as the rest of us! There were days when a sermon would have to be filmed 3-4 times before Alan could get it right. Sometimes it was due to a plane overhead or a cell phone would start ringing. But, most days, it was a burgeoning frustration of speaking to a lens and not a responsive congregation to take his words in as they were being spoken. A gift that Frederica Academy has so graciously given as we gather together in-person once again.

That first sermon was all about connection. A reminder that Jesus is still with us no matter where it is that we gather. A call to help us connect with others in new ways. On March 14 of this year I had no idea what the road ahead was going to look like. None of us did. But as Alan said a prayer that day for connection to help bring us all together in His love, grace and mercy, I felt a calmness wash over me. The job ahead of me wasn't about learning videography. It was about keeping people connected and working to bring that love, grace and mercy into the homes of our congregation, family, friends, and beyond. May we continue to stay connected not only with those nearby, but also with those who are still worshipping with us through the lens.

THE FIRST FEW WEEKS OF FILMING...



REFLECT

2020: WE WON'T FORGET THIS ONE





MAKESHIFT MANNA

Fed Up... but Fed

Written by Rev. Kate Buckley

God came to us in Jesus Christ – a tiny, helpless infant that needed cradling, rocking, swaddling, and feeding. God came to us in a human. A wandering human, who knelt beside, touched, healed, and loved on the hurting and the broken.

The bits of Scripture that stand out to me from Jesus' ministry always involve intimacy. When Jesus chats with, sees through, and connects deeply with the Samaritan woman at the well.

When Jesus proclaims the great faith of the hemorrhaging woman who is brazen enough to grab his cloak. When Jesus touches the eyelids of the blind. When Jesus lays his hand on the leper.

When Jesus sits to eat with tax collectors.

Touch is central to the ministry of Jesus Christ. Our powerful and sovereign God is born to us in Jesus, the one who never shies away from intimate connection; who was born to touch us. To touch our bodies and to touch our souls.

March 2020 saw me sitting in my minivan in the parking lot of Southeast Georgia Hospital in Brunswick, crying tears of frustration (and I realize now, grief). I had my clergy badge on my jacket. I had pumped myself up to try to talk my way in to see a hospitalized church member. The sign on the door of the hospital outlined the Covid policy for the health system: no visitors, including clergy, to the rooms of those in the rooms of the hospital. I was angry. I was helpless. I was discouraged. I sat in my car and cried, even as I understood that the protocol is for everyone's safety and it was the responsible move. How am I going to be there for church members during this time of isolation? Of restrictions? Of protocols and fearful swirling?

There will be no bedside prayers in the hospital, the nursing home is closed off to outside visitors, church members are hunkered down behind the doors of their houses... it felt dark.

After I had my moment of sadness and frustration... Deep breath. God is bigger than my fear. God is bigger than all of our fears. The best I can do is to show up by thinking outside of the box. Picking up the phone to pray over the soundwaves. Setting up a lawn chair in a driveway to have an outdoor visit. Dropping off care packages for those who are in a hospital room all alone. Handwriting notes from deacons to let people feel the love. Delivering the gorgeous, soft quilts made with love by the Hands and Heart ministry. Sitting on a bench on the porch of Magnolia Manor to visit through the window with a headset. Setting up plants and plaques in our church's Memorial Garden as a sacred space for people to mourn the death of loved ones we cannot grieve in traditional funeral gatherings. Organizing neighborhood groups to check in on church members down the street.

It is not ideal. I miss the touching. I miss the closeness of our folding chairs in the social hall. I miss the coffee and breakfast in between church services in the Britt room. I miss hugging the ones I go to visit. I miss holding the hand of my brother or sister in Christ as we pray together for healing, wholeness, and sustenance. But here's the thing. God always, always provides. Even when it feels like a meager portion. Even when we are wandering in the wilderness. Manna shows up out of thin air. It is not the feast we are used to or even the one we imagined or hoped for. But it is always enough. It will fill us up enough for just today. Thanks be to God.



TRY SOMETHING NEW


*CONNECTING IN THE
DISCONNECT*

BY NAT SCOTT

When the Pandemic first began, the Try Something New group had just returned from a three day culinary and historical tour of Thomasville, Georgia. We were excited for the many upcoming Try Something New events that were planned by the Congregational Life Committee and were already in the works for March through December. And then we were shut down. All that work and preparation had to be set aside as we did our best to find new ways to be the church.

First, there was on-the-fly training as the entire staff had to brush up on their skills with online social media. Learning Zoom proved to be an incredibly valuable and frustrating tool. All formerly held-in-person meetings became Zoom meetings. And there were huge hurdles to climb over. Remotely collaborating required layers of technological mediation. It was not as simple as walking into a meeting room, writing on post-it notes, and jamming on ideas. While Zoom was accessible, even for those not technically inclined, there were myriad activities that could make meetings challenging—especially when the group was large. The added steps required to test new software, share screens, wait for audio lags, and not talk over others while brainstorming, created friction and frustration for users. And yet, there were great things that came out of gathering via Zoom.





As we began to use Zoom for Sunday school, we discovered that class participation increased as we longed together for human interaction. People began to show up for Zoom meetings thirty minutes early just to have time to visit. It was at this point that we discovered more creative ways to gather using Zoom. We've now had two Zoom Trivia Nights just for fun and fellowship. In addition, we have established a new group we are calling Technology Ushers who will help folks stay connected to their church family using their electronic devices.

Thanks to our member, epidemiologist Dr. Tom Hodges, who gave an informative Q & A session with Alan Dyer on the church veranda at the outset of the Pandemic, we discovered that outdoor meetings provided the highest level of safety for in-person gatherings. We therefore rented a large tent which provided an outdoor multi-use space in the church yard by the playground. During the Pandemic, we gathered under the tent for movie nights even during the hottest dog days of summer. In the evenings, we would get a break from the heat and gentle breezes never failed to show up. In addition to Movie Nights, the tent was used for in-person prayer services on Sundays as well as Sunday school class meetings, Art Camp gathering space and VBS, also.

Finally, as the family of Christ, we are called to Christian service, especially to those who find themselves “broken on the wheels of life.” Finding ways to do this has required much creativity during the pandemic. To this end, Brenda Haughney helped to organize a trip to Cookeville, Tennessee where we joined folks from Charlotte, North Carolina as well as Virginia and Louisiana to work with the Lutheran Agency Inspiritus. We repaired houses that were damaged by the outbreak of tornadoes that struck earlier in March. To do work of this sort during a pandemic took heroic efforts to keep everyone safe and yet still accomplish the hard work of putting four homes back in order, one of which had to be built from the ground up. Our servants were: Brenda Haughney, Tom Haughney, Annie Franklin Arvin, Nicole Campbell, Carol Kiernan, Fred Griffith, Ellen Kuehm and Me (Nat Scott). As is always the case with short term mission trips, everyone came away feeling that they got much more out of the trip than they felt that they put in. As my friend Rev. Andrew Purves likes to say, “You can’t outgive the giver of life!”

As we continue to move towards the day that we will be able to look back at this strange time from our rear view mirrors; let us continue to be God’s loving and prayerful children, offering help wherever we can, spreading kindness wherever we go and looking out for one another however we can in the name of him who is greater than all of our problems.



Adapting Hoping & Waiting in the Ark

The time between March and now felt like eternity. The last Sunday the youth met together inside the church was March 8. That night, we sat together on the stage with big pieces of newsprint in front of us as we dreamed and wondered about what Youth Sunday 2020 would look like. We sat on the floor sharing before masks and social distancing were a thing sharing markers.

As we looked around the room, we were struck by the images of doves that hang in our Social Hall. If you remember, there are 4 quilt like banners that hang on the two side walls of the Social Hall and then there are two silk banners that frame the chancel area that depict doves flying. Those doves ended up becoming our theme for SSPC's first (and hopefully only) Virtual Youth Sunday.

One of the stories we rooted Youth Sunday in was the story from Genesis after the flood. Noah, his family, and all those animals are on the ark waiting with hope for a dove to return to them with some sort of life outside that ark and off the water. They adapted to life on the ark; they were hopeful that there would indeed be land again; and they continued to trust in God.





Living in a pandemic feels a lot like living on an ark. We're adapting, hoping, and we are filled with anticipation for the day when the dove will return with an olive branch.

The youth in particular are showing their resilience as they have adapted between a sudden school closure, being thrust into online learning, and missing the things that brought them joy-like being with their church family. In March, it felt like we hit a pause button on everything. Towards the end of March, Zoom entered the picture. When we first signed onto Zoom together, there was so much joy in being in the same place together. We caught up, we played, and we prayed for one another and for the world around us.

As the months went on, that joy began to diminish as we realized this could be for a long haul. We learned quickly that while Zoom is a fantastic tool, it is just not the same as being together in person. Sharing dessert over Zoom is just not the same as sitting together around a table and talking.

We spent the summer looking for hope when a school year was still uncertain and news reports were grim. One night in July, when it

was sprinkling rain, we had our first in-person gathering. We wore masks and laughed too hard playing "Ninja." We then moved onto the veranda as it was getting just dark enough to notice the flicker of a candle. As we each lit a candle, we talked about how this pandemic we are living in-it's a dark spot in our story. We were sad, frustrated, and afraid for our world. But as we looked at our candles, these lights, we were reminded that God's lights shines in darkness too! It was a moment where we were challenged to look for places of light in our own lives.

Like Noah's family on the ark trusted in God, we too are continuing to trust in God. We're doing that by praying. Our Small Group Study on the Beatitudes this fall has challenged to be more vulnerable with one another and with God, and that vulnerability appears most often in our prayers. In our praying, we're actively seeking God's will for our own lives. In our praying, we are looking out on the horizon for the dove with the olive branch-we're trusting that God is indeed here.

By Rev. Annie Franklin Arvin

WELCOMING NEW MEMBERS

JOINED FALL, 2020



Al & Rev. Dr. Joanna Adams

Al and Joanna Adams are native Atlantans though their families come from rural Georgia, Lyons and Waycross, etc. They have lived in Atlanta as adults but discovered SSI in 2014 and have spent more and more time here. One of the attractions is St. Simons Presbyterian, and they are excited to have a closer affiliation. Joanna is an ordained Presbyterian minister and has served five churches in Atlanta. Al was a trial lawyer for 46 years in Atlanta in all sorts of civil lawsuits. Both are now retired but devote time to volunteer and pro bono work. They hope to get to know more church members and will spend about half of their time on SSI.



Dr. Charles Max Jones

Max is a native of Waynesville, NC. After earning an undergraduate at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, he attended medical school at Columbia University in New York City. Max did his medical residency at Emory University in Atlanta, and later met his wife (and current SSPC member) Sandra while both were working at Grady Medical Center. After practicing medicine at Piedmont Hospital in Atlanta for 25 years, Max and Sandra moved to Washington, GA where they restored an old home and then to Big Canoe, GA where they lived for 18 years prior to retiring to St. Simons. Max and Sandra recently celebrated their 46th wedding anniversary.



Ellen Knesek

Ellen Knesek is a retired (but not tired!) teacher of middle school English in Texas. She moved to Brunswick from Austin 16 months ago. Her son, daughter-in-law, and two granddaughters (ages 8 and 9) still live in Austin. Ellen enjoys creating stained glass pieces, reading, knitting, traveling, and cooking, and has a eight-month-old Corgi who she thinks hung the moon! She has been visiting SSPC for over a year and enjoys the Presbyterian Women's circle group with Nora Sue Spencer and Nat Scott. Ellen writes that, "The welcoming and kind treatment I have received at St Simon's Presbyterian Church made my decision to be a part of this congregation easy."



Andy and Susan Langan

J Andrew (Andy) and Susan Langan come to us as affiliate members from Winnetka, Illinois, where they are longtime members of Winnetka Presbyterian Church and each have served on the Session at that church for multiple terms. Andy is a mostly retired lawyer, having been a partner for many years with the Kirkland & Ellis law firm. Susan is a psychotherapist with her own practice. They have a Cottage on Sea Island where they spend several months a year and have been attending SSPC as visitors for several years when on the island. Their son Drew, age 25, is a 2017 graduate of Swarthmore College and is now a second year law student at Duke.



Catherine McCrary

Catherine attended the St. Simons Presbyterian Church with her family as a child and has considered it her home church, even when she lived in Charleston, South Carolina. She is thrilled to be home again on St. Simons Island and the St. Simons Presbyterian church. She places importance on spending time with family and close friends. She has a daughter, Caroline who attends Wofford College and a son Heyward that attends Sewanee University. She is a Realtor with Deloach Sotheby's International Realty. When not working, she enjoys immersing herself in the outdoors and painting.



Linda and Rev. Stephen Nelms

Linda and Stephen Nelms permanently moved to St. Simons in July 2019 after visiting the island for vacation/attending conferences for 20+ years. Linda is a retired IT project manager having worked for both Delta Airlines and Clemson University. Stephen is an honorably retired pastor in the Presbyterian Church (USA) having served congregations in both the Greater Atlanta and Northeast Georgia Presbyteries. Stephen has also served on numerous presbytery and denominational committees, and was a commissioner to the national General Assembly in 2006. Both Linda and Stephen are avid readers, enjoy physical activity, and time with family and friends. They have two adult sons, two wonderful daughters-in-law, and three grandchildren all living in Texas, and they celebrated fifty years of marriage in March 2020!



Bob Ostendorf

Bob grew up in Fairfield, Alabama amongst the steel mills. A graduate of the University of Alabama, he worked for Texaco in Macon, GA prior to serving in the United States Army. After living in Miami, FL for thirteen years, he and his family settled in Jacksonville where they attended Mandarin Presbyterian Church for 20 years. He and wife Barbara moved to St. Simons in 2016. They have four adult children and five grandchildren. Bob enjoys playing golf and still regularly travels to Jacksonville several times a week where he runs his own business.

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