



Stirling Stuff

Volume 64, No. 5

May 2020

Pastor's Letter



Recently, I posted on my and our church's Facebook pages a blog by John Pavovitz entitled, *No, This Pandemic Isn't God's Plan*. Here is some of what he said:

Yesterday I read the social media post of a well-known Christian musician, assuring us that the pandemic the planet has been decimated by is, "all part of god's plan." He was prescribing optimism, by saying that the Almighty is engineering these days as a way of bringing humanity closer to him . . .

I don't have any inside information, but my hunch is that an all-powerful, all-knowing, creator who is supposedly made of love—isn't engineering this wide-scale suffering to teach humanity a lesson or to make a point . . .

Instead, I look for god in the way that human beings respond when senseless things happen: when people die too young, when natural disasters come, when pervasive sickness spreads. Instead of spending too much time interpreting the reason such things happen, I watch for the better angels here on the ground: the helpers and the healers and the caregivers and the embracers—and I find meaning there.

One of the things that often occurs when bad things happen is that people begin to do bad theology. They seem to want to find a way to make sense of what is happening, as the Christian musician does in the first paragraph of the quote above. It is easy to see the events of the Hebrew Scriptures where God strikes people dead, or leads armies to glorious victory by slaughtering opposing armies and to think God is like that today. But that is not the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We cannot, and we must not, reconcile the bad things as somehow what God wants. God is in the positive response of people when bad things happen. God is in the words of encouragement, the hugs, the care and support people give to those caught up in whatever bad thing is happening.

Today, during this pandemic, we see God not visiting judgment upon us for allowing abortions, or same-sex marriages as has been suggested by some leading evangelical pastors. Rather, we see God in the nurses and doctors run ragged trying to help the flood of people coming into our hospital emergency rooms. We see God in the people who shop for elderly neighbors. We see God in those who sew face masks to give away to those who need them. We see God in the workers in the food chain working hard to keep groceries on the shelves of our supermarkets. These are the kinds of places where God is working. The pandemic is a random act of the world that mutated and caused a virus. God is not in the random act, but in the loving actions that help those caught in the pandemic.

We will be continuing to have our worship services online for the foreseeable future. Please know that all of you are in my prayers and in the prayers of the church. Please be well and be safe.



See you in church . . . online!

Tom

The First Presbyterian Church of Stirling
Feeding Those Who Hunger

Worship Services and Scripture Passages for May

May 3, 2020

- *Fourth Sunday of Easter*
 Acts 2:42-47; Psalm 23;
 1 Peter 2:19-25; John 10:1-10
Boundaries and Gates

May 10, 2020

- *Fifth Sunday of Easter*
- *Mother's Day*
 Acts 7:55-60; Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16;
 1 Peter 2:2-10; John 14:1-14
You're Already There

May 17, 2020

- *Sixth Sunday of Easter*
 Acts 17:22-31; Psalm 66:8-20;
 1 Peter 3:13-22; John 14:14-21
A Lifeboat



May 24, 2020

- *Seventh Sunday of Easter*
- *Memorial Day Sunday*
 Acts 1:6-14; Psalm 68:1-10, 32-35;
 1 Peter 4:12-14, 5:6-11; John 17:1-11
Finding the Power Within Us

May 31, 2020

- *The Day of Pentecost*
 Numbers 11:24-30; Psalm 104:24-34, 35b;
 Acts 2:1-21; John 20:19-23
Finding Our Passion

Scriptures that are listed after the first Gospel reading are non-lectionary passages that will be used in the sermon. All the scriptures are provided here for any weekly Bible reading you may do.

Rev. Peters' sermons and the scripture readings are posted on the church website.

Visit: www.fpcstirling.org, click on:

"Sermon Archive," then select the sermon and/or scripture reading date you would like.



Message from Rev. Peters

If you know of anyone who needs help with food or something else, please contact Rev. Peters, and he will help get them what they need. We have people in the church who have been helping others by going to the grocery store or pharmacy.

I want to say a big thank you to the Deacons who have been making calls to people just to see how they're doing during this time. People have told me how much they appreciate these calls. It is vitally important for us to remain connected during this time of isolation.



Stewardship**- Rev. Peters**

We know this is a difficult time for everyone, which includes financial difficulties. If you are able to, we hope you will continue to send in your pledge either online using the **PayPal Online Giving Link** you can find on the home page of our church's website. If you use the Paypal account, please consider giving an extra dollar or two to cover the service fee. Or, mail your check to the church or directly to Elsie Turqman, our Financial Secretary, who makes the deposits and provides member statements. Her address is in the church directory. If you donate to "Mission of the Month," please note that on your check and include your envelope number. Thank you!

How to View Our Worship Service Online**- Janet Parziale**

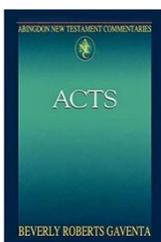
The church website, www.fpcstirling.org, has links on the home page that will take you to the Live Streaming and Video Archives page. On this page, you can click the "Live Streaming" link beside the picture of Rev. Peters. The links to all online services, listed by date, will hold the video recording of the live stream. The videos will be available for you to view later if you are not able to view the live streamed version. For several services, Rev. Peters has created a bulletin for you to use at home to follow along in the service. A link to each bulletin can also be found on this page. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Janet Parziale at janetparziale@comcast.net or call 908-647-2212, and she will do her best to help you.

**Join the Online Zoom Coffee Hour****- Janet Parziale**

Many folks have been enjoying our online Zoom coffee hours. It has brought together friends and family of the church here in Long Hill and surrounding towns and from as far away as Washington State with Dani Clark and Iowa with David, Brooke, and Eleanor Parziale, and New York City with Ali Peters. For many, these online visits with one another have been fun, therapeutic, and a great way to catch up. If you have not attended, please try it during May. You do not need any special software to join in the fun; just click the link on the email provided by Rev. Peters to participate. You can join with video or just with audio. You can do this using your phone, kindle, tablet, or computer. If you need the link resent, please feel free to contact Janet Parziale (at janetparziale@comcast.net or 908-647-2212) or Rev. Peters. They will be happy to forward you the email with the link. We hope to see you there this coming Sunday!

Christian Education Committee**Adult Bible Study****- Rev. Peters**

Bible Study will continue on **Thursdays at 10:30 a.m. online**. We are using **Dr. Beverly Gaventa's book, Acts**; I read portions that I think are important and we discuss them. You may access the Bible Study through the following: Paste the address of the "Join Zoom Meeting" address in your web browser and then paste the Password if or when asked for.



Join Zoom Meeting: <https://zoom.us/j/955212010?pwd=czB0UUpBaWFuSmdJSnVCYlZqQXBzUT09>
 Meeting ID: 955 212 010 Password: 202121

Deacons' Corner

- Janet Parziale

Mission of the Month - May & June - Local Food Pantry

The Mission of the Month for May and June will go towards our local **Food Pantry at St. Vincent's church** across the street from our church. With the current pandemic still hitting many individuals hard, getting food on the table has become extremely difficult for many families. Food Pantries across the nation are being stretched beyond their limits to support their local communities. Please consider giving to this worthy mission to help fund our local Food Pantry. This special offering will be collected throughout the months of May and June.



Since we are not currently meeting at the church, feel free to send your donation for this mission giving to the church office (158 Central Ave, Stirling, NJ 07980) or directly to Elsie Turqman. Remember to include your name and/or your envelope number if you would like your donation to be recorded. **You may also drop off any food donations (non-perishable items) at St. Vincent's church. Simply place your food items inside the church's vestibule at St. Vincent's; the doors are always open.** Thank you in advance for supporting this special mission program.

Know Someone Who Needs a Card?

Each week during the Prayers of the People, folks in the congregation lift up names of fellow members, friends, and family who need our prayers for joys and concerns. Many have attested to the power of prayer in helping to give strength to all those involved. A Deacon notes names of members mentioned and sends cards to let them know they're being thought of and they're in the prayers of the congregation to get well, share joyful wishes, or express sympathy.



During this time when we are not meeting together, if you know of a member who is in need of our thoughts or prayers, please let Janet Parziale know so that a card can be sent. Janet can be reached at janetparziale@comcast.net or 908-647-2212.



Need Help? Want to Chat?

During this time of staying at home, it is easy to begin missing that human connection. If you are in need of help getting groceries or just want to talk to someone, please feel free to call a Deacon or Rev. Peters. We are ready to help in any way we can. If you know of someone who needs assistance, please reach out to one of us, even if it's just for an ear to listen.

Mission Programs

Bridges Outreach Lunch Program

- Janet Parziale



Our next commitment date for preparing 40 lunches has been changed to Monday, May 4th. I have been in contact with the Bridges organization and, while they are in need of as many lunches as we can provide, we all want to ensure that they are prepared and delivered in a manner that is safe for everyone. Going forward, Bridges is not using their sign-up process to schedule lunch drop-offs. They are asking that we bring them any day (Mon-Thurs) of the week convenient to us. During this time, only one person will be handling the preparations each time. For May, Toni Hopcraft will be making the lunches and delivering them on Monday, May 4th. Thank you, Toni

Church Website & Facebook Page

To keep up-to-date with what's happening at our Church, make it a point to check in regularly on the Church website, www.fpcstirling.org, and Facebook page, https://www.facebook.com/fpcStirling/?ref=aymt_homepage_panel. They are good sources for church news, the Church calendar, Stirling Stuff, Pastor's sermons, Scripture readings, Church history, and more.

Church Archives

- Jan Somers



Please continue to forward news clippings, bulletins, programs, pictures, or other memorabilia regarding any member of our church family so our archives can be kept up-to-date. **Please be sure items are dated and, if possible, the names of church members and/or families are highlighted.** There is a **Church Archives** mailbox outside the church offices for this purpose.

If you have some free time, we have quite a pile of articles/newspapers that have accumulated since we last had a workday. They need to be perused and "clipped" so they can be put into our binders. Speak to Jan or Rev. Peters if you'd like to help keep the archives up-to-date.

Upcoming Graduations

- Jan Somers



Please send me the names and specifics regarding graduates in your families so they can be recognized for their achievements. Thank you.

Some Reasons to Smile . . .

Wedding Congratulations



Congratulations to Kim Pateman and Riley Moore who were married on the beach in Waialua, Oahu, Hawaii on April 4th. Thanks to technology, Kim's parents, Lore and Rich, and the couple's other family members and friends were able to watch the ceremony. Not the same as being there in person, but a good alternative. Best wishes to Kim and Riley as they begin their new life together!



Thank you!

- Lore Pateman

Elsie Turqman has been making masks and surgical hats for everyone, including Kim in Hawaii! She deserves so many thanks!!!! Elsie makes the world a better place!
(Pictured here: Kim in the hospital in Hawaii)



National Nurses Day



May 6th is National Nurses Day. What a perfect time to remember all those nurses around the world who are working tirelessly to help others during this pandemic. Please say an extra prayer and a thank you for all of them!

Helping Out

- Jan Somers

Elsie Turqman and Jan Somers have been sewing fabric face masks. If you know of anyone who needs them, please contact Elsie or Jan. If you have any cotton fabric or elastic you can donate for this purpose, please let them know that also, and we can arrange to have it picked up.



Looking Forward to . . .

- Jan Somers

Since I haven't been able to see my grandchildren, I've been especially missing their wonderful hugs. As we all know, texting and skyping and phone calls are nice, but not the same. A few days ago, my granddaughter, Kylin, who's 14th birthday I missed in March, made me feel really good. She told me to keep track of the missed hugs and she will give me all of them when this is over and we can get together again. Definitely something to look forward to!



If you have some good news or happy items you'd like to share, please send them to me for the next issue of Stirling Stuff. Stay well everyone! (Jan Somers)



Ongoing Mission Programs

Road to Bridges

Change (and more) is collected during Fellowship Hour and supports the Road to Bridges program, providing 40 lunches per month to NJ/NY homeless.

Township Food Pantry

Non-perishable food items can be left in baskets labeled "Food Pantry Donations" in the Church narthex and outside Pollard Hall.

Items collected for various causes may be placed on the pew in Pollard Hall:

- ✓ Full-sized and "courtesy"-sized bars of soap, shampoo, conditioner, shower caps
- ✓ Fabric: about ½ yard minimum, to make small bears for children, totes for wheelchair patients, etc. Yarn: to make lap robes for wounded veterans, afghans for battered women, and hats for newborns in hospitals

Ongoing Fundraisers

ShopRite Gift Cards

- ✓ No additional cost to you to use
- ✓ Purchase cards at face value
- ✓ Church earns 5%
- ✓ Denominations available are:

\$20, \$50, \$100

Gift Cards are available from Yvonne Fletcher.

iGive

- ✓ No cost to you
- ✓ Log on / sign up / find out more at:
<http://www.igive.com/FirstPresbyterianChurch-StirlingNJ>
- ✓ E-mail this information to your friends
- ✓ Questions? Contact Debra Sprague

Please e-mail submissions for the
June issue of Stirling Stuff to:
jsomers17@hotmail.com
by **May 21st**. Thank you!

Stirling Stuff is the newsletter of

Why not invite a friend to online church?



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Our Mission

Jesus said, "Feed My Sheep." This welcoming and caring family, empowered by the love of Christ, shares the grace and peace of God's blessings by serving those who are hungry in body or spirit.

