



Life Together...

Physically Apart, Together in Spirit

Ah, April. How you are emblematic of freedom while you push away winter's death and usher in the new life of spring. You enter with bare branches, sparse muddy yards, popping flower bulbs and budding ornamentals. You leave, flourished in a crown of green leaves, yards thickened with lush fresh cut grass, flowerbeds overflowing, and woodland floors blanketed in wildflowers and morels. Ah, April, you are the most amazing of all months.

Oh, April. What will you bring each year? There are the Aprils where we leave our windows open at night to let the warm moist breezes float in with the sounds of chirping frogs who lie awake and aroused among the growing lilies in the ditches. There are Aprils where we stroll through the parks, forests and neighborhoods in a t-shirt or light jacket without a care in the world. But, oh, April, there are years when it is blustery wet and cold. There are Aprils that howl in horrible winds, cloudy skies and freezing nights. There are Aprils where we only run to our car and into wherever we are going to avoid the spoils of your tantrum. Oh, April, you give us the years full of the whole mix. We easily go to bed under a gentle warm rain after a day of frolicking in your flora, but then are sent to crank up our furnaces and bunker down until you return to calm. Oh, April, you are the most fickle of all the months.

This April will be one to remember. April enters with green grass, flowering daffodils, early-spring vegetable gardens already planted, bright blue skies and the warm sun upon our face. And yet, April enters with an immense fear. The traditional tax day is slated to bring the peak of a pandemic, slaying thousands of people who should otherwise be carrying about their daily business.

April brings in great sadness, anxiety, depression, grief, panic, paranoia, doubt, distress and panic. To top it off, April brings in isolation and loneliness. Though the weather says go outside, COVID-19 says to think twice about where you are going. Residents of care and retirement facilities have no chance of enjoying this April, besides by looking through a window, as they are kept in solitude in their rooms. The rest of us get to choose to venture out, but warily.

In our isolation, bundled with a potpourri of emotions, we seek a new normal. This April, we are learning a new side of ourselves, individually and collectively. We are finding ourselves being tested. In order to pass the test, we need to become creative, get our minds working on a new level, to think outside the box, and to realize that the way we have been living is not the only way to live.

There are all sorts of ways to stay connected to one another in our world. There are all sorts of possibilities to help other people. Though we could all use a bit of a rest, we all find it hard not to stay busy. So why not use

this time to brighten our minds as well as brighten the lives of others? We can make the best of this situation.

April enters with Palm Sunday, Holy Week and Easter. As we approach what is predicted to be the peak of the coronavirus outbreak, we will have this holy time to prepare. Honestly, it is very interesting that the peak of the pandemic could happen three days after Easter. If there was ever a time that the Christians of this world should be braced for anything to happen, it would be at this time, spiritually speaking.

Lent is always a time to prepare to die with Christ on the cross, come Good Friday. We ramp up to this death on the cross by celebrating Jesus as King and Savior on Palm Sunday and then celebrate being one with God and with one another with Holy Communion on Maundy Thursday. And as Maundy means 'new commandment', we receive not only the meal shared with Jesus and his disciples but, once again, we receive the new commandment from Jesus to 'love one another'. After six weeks of Lenten preparation, and in receiving that loving command, as we remember God's love for us and the life that we have been granted, and how we all are connected to one another, and re-understanding to re-embrace the utmost necessity of forgiveness, we are finally ready to shut the darkness off from coming into our lives. We are ready to kill the old life that keeps us from forgivingly loving one another, including our own self. We are ready to rise to new life on Easter morning, shrouded in light and love. We are ready to embrace whatever the world throws at us, because we are one, together, in the Triune God. We are ready to be disciples of Christ, willingly entering the world in order to help others in their times of need and to rejoice and celebrate together in the beauty that will always exist no matter how dark the world may grow.

In our life together, we are urged more and more to be together. Though physically apart, we are together in spirit. And that means we can use our creativity, our love and our passion to be there for one another as the world faces this growing chaos. Let the Holy Spirit in. Let Christ in. Let our Creator in. Open up, turn your love light on as bright as it can get, and fight this fear utilizing the faith we have dwelling within us. Fight the darkness that seeks to separate us. Spring is here. Its time to try a new life that we have never known before. Stay connected in love. Christ will show you the way. Despite what we are up against, let us remain prayerful, hopeful, joyful, peaceful and faithful in these times to come. We are not alone. We have each other, in a community built upon the foundation of God's love. Nothing can take that away.

Grace and Peace,
Mike

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.
 Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.
 Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication
 with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.
 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,
 will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
 — Philipians 4:4-7



CHURCH EVENTS WORSHIP SERVICES AND LOOKING FORWARD

As Gov. Pritzker has extended the stay-at-home order for the State of Illinois, the earliest we could possibly resume worship would be May 3. This also means that the earliest we could have any activities where people are physically together is May 1. We will continue to follow the Illinois “shelter in place” order directives and the status of the COVID-19 pandemic, and may even choose to keep church activities sheltered for an even-longer period. Please realize that this shelter could go on long after April 30.

Our ultimate goal is to keep everyone healthy. What we know right now is that we don’t know how long this all will last. The Session will meet for a Zoom (online/phone) meeting on April 20 to discuss plans for the month of May. As we remain physically apart from one another, we are together in spirit.

Live Stream Worship Services

As we now know that we will be apart longer than we originally thought, we are beginning to offer live stream worship services, which you can either watch via the church’s Facebook page OR listen to via the telephone.

To WATCH the livestream service, go to our church’s Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/firstpresmorrison> during the time of an upcoming service. There will be a post at the top that says I am live. Just click to join in. If you don’t make it at that time, the post will remain up and you can watch it at a later time. You can also invite others to watch, or share it with others when it is finished.

To LISTEN to the livestream service, you can call into the conference call number noted below. We will have a phone in the sanctuary on speaker, so

you can hear the service. To do that, call (712) 775-7031. When prompted, type in the access code: 884 611 and then press the pound key (#). This will connect you to the service (and anyone else who has called in). Please put your phone on ‘mute’ during the service, if able. This will keep background noises in your house from interfering with the worship service sound.

There will be a service every Sunday morning in April at 10:15 a.m. and services on Maundy Thursday, April 9, and Good Friday, April 10, both at 7 p.m.



Holy Week

KEEPING IT TOGETHER...

TOGETHER These are tough times we are facing. Isolation is not easy, whether you are with your family or by yourself. The fears and worries that we are going through right now can easily consume us. We need to stick together and help each other out. Please remember to check in on others via e-mail, texting, video-chatting or phone. Consider setting up Zoom chats with groups of people. Just because we are not physically together, it does not mean we need to be kept apart. Be creative! The church will continue to communicate via e-mail; on the First Presbyterian Church Facebook group page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/firstpresmorrison>; and through our website: www.firstpresmorrison.org.

As we are beginning weekly livestreamed services, we will not likely send out weekly mailings. To

help pass the time, you can also check out past worship services at www.nimbitmusic.com/firstpresmorrisonworship. Just click the ‘Store’ tab at the top and you can listen to services from the past four plus years. And did you miss out on the open mics we once hosted, or want to revisit them? You can listen to those at www.nimbitmusic.com/localmusiclive. This includes the benefit concert we hosted at our church.

Hang in there. We can keep it together, if we stick together!

BIBLE STUDY

We have postponed meeting in person until the world gets healthy. Instead, we are hosting the studies via Zoom. If you are unfamiliar with Zoom, it is a video conference website/app. If you are using your smartphone, you will need to install the Zoom app first. If you are using your computer, you just need to click the link below (and possibly enter the meeting ID and password if prompted to do so). If you need assistance, call a child or grandchild. They’ll love to help you figure it out!

The Bible studies in the past were an hour but I will be limiting them now to 45 minutes. Meetings will begin at 9:30 a.m. and end no later than 10:15 a.m.

If you are interested in a Bible study, but this day and time does not work for you, please let me know and I can investigate setting up a second study group.

Use the following link to enter the Zoom Bible study meeting: <https://us04web.zoom.us/j/979711321?pwd=aGFNY2F3VEF0RzZNd1hCZGdkMUx2UT09> You may be prompted to enter this info, or you may not be:
 Meeting ID: 979 711 321
 Password: 408812

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STEWARDSHIP Thoughts on stewardship in a time of trial:

“...Each time I get paid—whether my check is big or small, growing or shrinking—when I give the ‘first fruits’ of that income to God through my local church, I am making a tangible declaration to me and my family that God is my ultimate provider and the foundation of my trust.

“I’m not talking about some kind of magic elixir here. Tithes and offerings aren’t a snake oil that wards off economic collapse and physical sickness. In fact, suffering is part of the Christian experience. Jesus promised it (John 16:33).

“But, if money is a tangible representation of our lives, our work, our contribution to the world, then when I give the first portions of whatever I make to my church, I am declaring boldly that no matter what is going on around me, my *ultimate* hope and trust are rooted in Christ.”

—Erik Cooper, thestonetable.org

Please remember your church and continue to send your contributions to the office: First Presbyterian Church, 100 E. Lincolnway, Morrison IL 61270. Or donate online at www.firstpresmorrison.org/giving.

TED LUTHER MEMORIAL Ted Luther completed this portion of his life on January 16. A memorial service was to be held on April 4. It has been postponed with a date to be determined. News will be shared as soon as it’s available.

FREE COMMUNITY MEALS The Free Community Meals will not be offered in the month of April.

PRESBYTERY MEETING The Presbytery of Blackhawk will meet on Tuesday, April 14, at 9:30 a.m., through the Zoom video conferencing service. Scott Vandermyde will be our representative again.

DEACONS will meet April 20 at 10:00 a.m. via Zoom.

SESSION will meet April 20 at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom.

PW MEETINGS The PW Coordinating Team is scheduled to meet via phone or Zoom on April 21 at 10:30 a.m. Lynn Knox will be in touch.

NEWSLETTER Please get information to be included in the May *Life Together* newsletter to the office by April 23.

GOLDEN OLDIES will not meet in April.

COOKIE FROST-OFF Our annual May Day cookie frost-off has been cancelled. Hopefully we can have a 4th of July frost-off!

ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING In a world of disaster, hunger and oppression millions of people lack access to sustainable food sources, clean water, sanitation, education and opportunity. The three programs supported by One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS)—Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, the Presbyterian Hunger Program, and Self-Development of People—all work in different ways to serve individuals and communities in need. See <https://specialofferings.pcusa.org/offering/oghs/> for more information on the programs and to donate online. Or send your donations to the church office and Jean will forward them to OGHS. This opportunity ends on April 12 (Easter).



The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

—Psalm 27:1

LOCAL AND OTHER RESOURCES

Golden Meals: Call 815 626-4442 (Monday-Thursday, 7:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.) Hot meals delivered Monday-Thursday. (With frozen, sack meal options for the weekend.)

United Way: Will deliver groceries and restaurant orders. Call 815 441-7456.

Sullivan’s Foods: Tuesday and Thursdays 7-8:00 a.m. shopping is reserved for senior citizens and at-risk individuals.

Dollar General: Shopping reserved for seniors during the first hour of business each day, 8-9:00 a.m.

Local Restaurants: Some are offering pick-up, curbside pick-up and delivery. A list is available on the Morrison Chamber of Commerce website: <http://morrisonchamber.com>.

City News: Keep up on local news at our city’s Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/thecityofmorrison>

Morrison Community Hospital: The hospital’s Facebook page provides information on new check-in procedures and other updates: <https://www.facebook.com/MorrisonCommunityHospital>

PC(USA): The PC(USA) COVID-19 dedicated webpage adds new information and resources regularly in many areas: <https://www.pcusa.org/covid19/>.

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CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS

DOUG'S RESIGNATION

Doug Harridge has heavy-heartedly decided to resign his position as organist and Director of Music Ministry due to health issues. We give many thanks for Doug's time with us and we pray for his health to recover. If we regather for worship in May, he will lead the choir until their last day on May 17.



BUILDING FUND The Session approved using Building Account funds to replace the door leading from the church to the daycare playground area with a safer, more weather-proof steel door. If you would like to make a donation to this building improvement, or any other, please mail funds to the church with "Building Fund" noted.

COOKBOOKS FOR SALE

The First Presbyterian Church "Family & Friends" cookbooks have been produced and are available to purchase for \$10.00 each. Scores of delicious recipes are included. Contact the church office to buy one. All funds raised will be donated to the Blakelyn Musch fund (infant daughter of member Aubrey Musch, getting treatment from Scimitar syndrome).

INTERIM PRESBYTER

The Rev. Nancy Dolan will serve as the Executive Presbyter Bridge Consultant for Blackhawk Presbytery, with the retirement of Rev. Dr. John Rickard. Nancy comes to us from Chicago Presbytery where she was the pastor of Kirk of the Lakes Presbyterian Church and the Interim Head of

Staff at the First Presbyterian Church of Lake Forest. Before attending and graduating from McCormick Seminary, Nancy spent 17 years working in Human Resources Management for the Allstate Insurance Company.

STRONGHOLD CAMP

Assuming the shelter in place order is no longer in place, there will be summer camp. Registration is underway for fun and meaningful summer camps at Stronghold. See the Stronghold website for information: www.strongholdcenter.org/summercamps.html Tiered pricing and youth scholarships are available! Talk with Pastor Mike if you're interested.

SUNDAY SCHOOL

The Sunday School leaders have been posting videos and activities to the FPC and UMC Facebook pages for the kids. Check them out at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/firstpresmorrison>.

COMMUNITY NEWS

FOOD PANTRY The Morrison Friends Food Pantry requests that churches *do not* send volunteers to help at this time. They have implemented new procedures for the time being. They will continue to serve on Thursday's from 7:30 to 9:30 a.m. It will be a curbside service.

2020 CENSUS Remember to respond to the 2020 Census so that our region gets the funding it needs. You should have received a mailing with an online link. Visit 2020census.gov to access and complete the questionnaire. This is how towns get money. For more federal and state assistance, it is important to fill this out!

APRIL SCRIPTURE READINGS



April 5: Matthew 21:1-11
Psalm 118:1-2; 19-29
Isaiah 50:4-9a;
Philippians 2:5-11

April 12: John 20:1-18;
Matthew 28:1-10;
Acts 10:34-43;
Jeremiah 31:1-6;
1 Corinthians 3:1-4;

April 19: John 20:19-31
Acts 2:14a, 22-32;
1 Peter 1:3-9

April 26: Luke 24:13-35
Acts 2:14a, 36-41;
1 Peter 1:17-23

GOOD FRIDAY CONCERT

Pastor Al Pruis and Rich Criss will present a special live-streamed service of organ and piano music interspersed with the Good Friday scripture from the sanctuary of Emmanuel Church at noon on Good Friday, April 10. All are invited to tune in on the church's Facebook page.



MESSIAH PERFORMANCE

Kathy Janicek, director of the biannual community performance of Handel's "Messiah," noted that the group hopes to reschedule the performance. It had been scheduled for Palm Sunday. Stay tuned.

VOICES OF PRAISE The Voices of Praise Spring Cantata has also been postponed but will be rescheduled.



Remember in prayer: Bob Atherton, Rick Barr, Dan Brandon, Rich Glazier, Orville Goodenough, Mary Kernan, Spencer Knox, Joyce Mathew, Blakelyn Musch, Youdelka Philippe (MSH), Nancy Rector, Edna Reynolds, Ken Selburg, Cooke Shawver, Jean Slavin, Julie Stinson, Dick Vandermyde.

Anniversary This Week

4/8: Dalb & Jean Temple

Pastor Mike Selburg will continue to be on the job and available to minister to people's needs through the "shelter-in-place order period. Contact him by phone or e-mail (revselburg@gmail.com). Also, updates will be posted to the church's website, www.firstpresmorrison.org, and Facebook group page, www.facebook.com/groups/firstpresmorrison.