

# The Network

## University Presbyterian Church

### May-June 2020

A message from our Pastor:

As of this writing, there is still no information as to when communities of faith will be allowed to return to public worship. I am intentional in the phrasing “return to public worship” rather than “re-open” because, at least for us at UPC, the church has never closed. The building might be empty on Sunday mornings, but the worship and ministry of Jesus Christ have certainly continued with great vigor during these stressful days of lockdown. I share with you a sampling of some of the ways the Body of Christ here at UPC has been very active:

—virtual worship has been celebrated each week in people’s homes, as well as the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper on the first Sunday in May

—a mid-week Bible study takes place each Wednesday, drawing 16-20 participants

—the Food Pantry continues to service the community every Tuesday and Thursday, and is feeding more than double our usual client numbers. This would not be possible without church members volunteering their time and financial gifts.

—generous gifts have been made by members to a Covid-19 Relief Fund which has helped numerous households within the Buffalo area as well as within our congregation (see related article in this newsletter)

—plans have been made to recognize and celebrate the graduations of university and high school students in our congregation

—the Youth Group continues to meet virtually (see related article in this newsletter about the Youth Group’s Psalm of Lament)

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—Deacons call and check on members of our congregation

—members are assisting one another with grocery shopping, delivering worship materials, and making calls of support

—the Session and some other church committees continue to meet virtually

—I represented UPC in an online Interfaith Prayer Gathering of Solidarity, sponsored by our friends at Buffalo United for Peace (formerly known as the Turkish Cultural Center)

—the Chancel Choir holds a virtual meeting each Thursday for fellowship and support

—church members have offered their gifts of music and recorded musical selections for our online worship experiences

—church staff continue to plan worship, create music, administer the church's business, and maintain the building

Even with the sanctuary closed, it is a busy time for our congregation's ministries!

I want to assure our members that the Session and I are having very thoughtful deliberations about what a return to public worship would look like and how to conduct it safely. Even when the state permits the resumption of public worship, we will nevertheless consider whether it is safe for us to do so. There are many details and considerations yet to be worked out. And we will communicate a clear and developed plan with our members when we are ready so you will have all the information necessary to make your own determination about whether to join in public worship.

In the meantime, I continually give thanks for the good people of UPC who have shown great compassion toward others and great commitment to the way of Jesus Christ.

Blessings!

Tracy

## Mid-Week Virtual Bible Study

Everyone is welcome to join the weekly Bible Study held on Wednesdays at 1 p.m. The Zoom link to the gathering is sent out in advance. Below is information on upcoming classes:

**Wed., May 20:** Howard Henry facilitates a Bible study using a format he experienced at the border with the organization, Frontera de Cristo.

**Wed. May 27– July 22: "Into the Light: Finding Hope through Prayers of Lament", led by Gladys Gifford, Tracy Daub and others**

Using the 2020-21 PW/Horizons Bible Study, the group will explore the biblical practice of the lament. In the introduction, the author explains that "lament" properly understood is a biblical practice which leads to hope. Lament is not appropriate for situations where we have control. In those situations, the proper response is to confess and repent our inaction. Rather, lament is a needed response for "momentous occasions of grief" such as natural disasters or terrorism or tragic accidents -- and now, pandemics. She also suggests that lament should be a regular part of our worship together.

We plan to follow all nine lessons in the study. Each lesson offers scripture from both Old and New Testaments which guide us through learning the practice of lament and then arriving at new hope.

How can we do this, when meeting virtually? First, the leader each week will send an email with scriptures and main ideas for each lesson. Each participant will be encouraged to write their own laments and to draw images of what they lament, and then share when we meet.

Tracy and I find this theme to be a rich source of strength during these times when we are apart from each other. We hope that everyone will join us for this spiritual nourishment from scripture.

-Gladys Gifford



## Youth Group Writes a Psalm of Lament

Last week the Youth Group gathered for a Zoom meeting with their leader Mackintosh Barker and discussed the biblical practice of the lament—a cry of distress in difficult times. Many of the psalms in the Bible are laments. The youth wrote a new psalm for our present times, which is shared below:

### Psalm 2020

By Abby Wadkins-Daub, Charlie Hutton, Kira Khayat, Matt Bottorf, Tim Moorhouse, Sara Koteris, Ryan Koteris, and Sarah Hennessy

Listen to our pleas, O God!

Help us get through these difficult times  
Hear those who are sick,  
Protect those who are healthy

People are dying!

People are forced to be shut out from the outside world

We are losing our graduation, we are losing our prom

The pandemic has caused the loss of celebration of the achievements people have made in their education!

People are scared to do their jobs!

There seems to be a lack of assistance from some of our elected officials and government

Those who are wealthy or famous seem to have more assistance than others who might need it

Some people aren't even wearing masks or social distancing! Don't they know that if they follow the rules that we can re-open things and get back to our normal lives faster?

People are protesting in big groups!

It seems as though some people only care about themselves and not others.

God, we know you are there for us throughout our lives, through thick and thin. We know that you listen and that you hear our prayers.

Help the elderly,  
Please help to cure this virus!  
We need a vaccine,  
Give people hope!

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*(lament, continued)*

Please give people common sense and compassion for others,  
Educate those who might seem less intelligent

We ask for speedy recoveries for those who are afflicted with this awful virus

We know you hear us and our prayers,

We will praise God by listening to guidelines in place to help us,

We look forward to going back to church, and worshipping as a community!

## **Congratulations to Graduates!**

UPC congratulates the following individuals upon their graduation:

**Oladapo Ogunbodede (Dapo):** graduated from UB with a PhD in  
Aerospace Engineering

**Timothy Moorhouse:** graduates from City Honors School June 25

**Sophie Smith:** graduates from Amherst Central High School June 27

Dapo was celebrated by our congregation at a virtual Coffee Hour on  
Sunday, May 17.

Please join us on Sunday, June 28 at 12 noon for a virtual Coffee Hour  
celebrating Tim and Sophie's graduations. A link to that gathering will be  
sent to you via email.

## **Report on the Covid-19 Relief Fund**

UPC started a Covid-19 Relief Fund to assist people facing financial hardships brought on by the pandemic. Members of the congregation have been very generous, donating \$7535 to date.

This money has been distributed to individuals and households both within the UPC family as well as in the broader Buffalo area.

Working with two local organizations, Family Promise of WNY and Jericho Road Ministries, we have been able to identify households in need and have distributed the funds accordingly. The funds have helped people pay monthly rents, utilities, food, and other essentials.

Donations to this relief fund are still welcome. Checks can be made out to "University Presbyterian Church" with "Covid-19 Relief Fund" in the memo line.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed. These gifts have made a vital difference in people's lives.

## **UPC Receives Payroll Protection Plan Grant**

Thanks to the significant effort by Jim Smyton and Janet Mazzaroppi, UPC applied for and was approved for the federal funds available to non-profits through the PPP grant program. This grant provides funds for payroll and utility expenses and offers vital assistance to small businesses and non-profits in these financially challenging times. This was not a simple endeavor and so we are extremely grateful for Jim and Janet's efforts on behalf of our congregation!

## Scripture Readings

Sunday May 24— 7th Sunday of Easter  
Acts 1:6-14; Ps. 68:1-10, 32-35;  
1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11; John 17:1-11

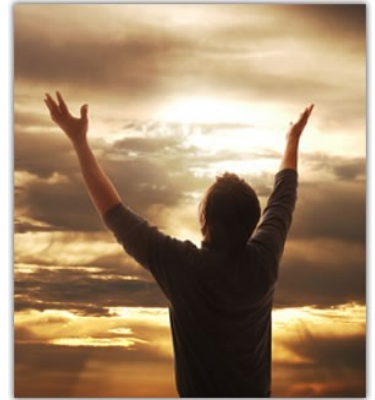
Sunday May 31—Day of Pentecost  
Acts 2:1-21 or Num. 11:24-30;  
Ps. 104:24-34, 35b; 1 Cor. 12:3b-13 or  
Acts 2:1-21; John 20:19-23 or John 7:37-39

Sunday June 7— Trinity Sunday  
Gen. 1:1-2:4a; Ps. 8;  
2 Cor. 13:11-13; Matt. 28:16-20

Sunday June 14—2nd Sunday after Pentecost  
Gen. 8:1-15 (21:1-7); Ps. 116:1-2, 12-19;  
Rom. 5:1-8; Matt. 9:35-10:8 (9-23)

Sunday June 21—3rd Sunday after Pentecost  
Gen. 21:8-21; Ps. 86:1-10, 16-17;  
Rom. 6:1b-11; Matt. 10:24-39

Sunday June 28—4th Sunday after Pentecost  
Gen. 22:1-14; Ps. 13; Rom. 6:12-23;  
Matt. 10:40-42



## Social Distancing Birthday Wishes to ...

### MAY

- 6 Jeffrey Grisante
- 6 Judy Betz
- 7 Asia Knight
- 11 Shahnaz Morris
- 15 Geoffrey Burker
- 16 Lisa Patel
- 22 Sarah Omicioli
- 24 Robert Hallborg



### JUNE

- 1 Thomas Somerville
- 2 Timothy Harbison
- 6 Dennis Erickson
- 7 Susan Beyer
- 11 Priscilla Stevens
- 21 Sabrina Burker
- 24 Clark Whitefield
- 26 Zain Shirazi
- 26 Russell Whitefield
- 30 Roger Dahl

