

La Palabra

April 2020

www.fpcmesa.org

480-964-8606

A Message from Ann

Friends in Christ,

A great deal has changed again recently. Schools are closed for the remainder of the year, and we are all now under a “Stay Home, Stay Healthy, Stay Connected” order from Governor Ducey. For many of us, this won’t significantly change the way we’ve been living for the past couple of weeks, though it will extend it at least through the end of April.

While we were hoping and praying that we would be back together for worship by Easter, this new order makes that impossible. That is a loss for all of us, yet something we must accept in order to do what is in our control to slow the spread of the corona virus. This makes us all sad, and it is indeed a time to lament.

Together we can lament the virulence of this virus and the enormity of its effects. We can lament the multitudes of deaths, now in the tens of thousands, with the United States now having more cases of COVID-19 than anywhere else in the world. We can lament the loss of being near to those we love, of being able to move about more freely, of the shortage of medical supplies and equipment, of the enormous workload for so many among us and the lack of work for so very many others.

There is much to lament these days, and God too laments. God in Christ suffered on the cross for the life of the world, and God continues to suffer with us. Even so, as my mentor J. Todd Billings addresses in his book “Rejoicing in Lament,” we can rejoice that the God we worship, the God revealed to us in Jesus Christ our Lord, is a God who hears our lament, a God who has taken our own suffering upon himself and redeemed it for the sake of the world.

So yes, this is a time to lament. And it is also a time to prepare for Easter. In order to get to Easter, we must travel through the darkness of Good Friday and the uncertainty of Holy Saturday. Only then do we emerge into the Light of God’s resurrected Love, that glorious Easter Day!

Friends, we will emerge from this. We will also be changed by this. Only God knows how those changes will take shape over time and what they will mean for both our individual and communal lives. But God is in the midst of this storm and God will see us through it. And when we are finally on the other side, we will celebrate. We will rejoice. We will gather and worship the Lord our God, the God of all creation! Thankfully, Easter is a season, not just one day. Easter will come. Christ will rise. New life will begin again. Thanks be to God!

~ Ann

INDEX

<i>A Message from Ann.....</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Mark’s Remarks (Worship).....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Stewardship Message</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Discipleship.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Montlure News</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>April Birthdays.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Closure Update.....</i>	<i>6</i>

WORSHIP

Worship (E) – Dan Reeves
Dir. Of Music Ministries (Chair) – Mark Ramsey
Prayer Chain (D) — Joy Schulz

Funerals/Memorials (D) — Renita Jurgensen
Worship (D) — David Miller

Mark's Remarks

(480) 964-8606, EXT. 103; MUSIC@FPCMESA.ORG

“The final aim and reason of all music is nothing other than the glorification of God and the refreshment of the spirit.” - Johann Sebastian Bach

As we enter Holy Week, we pray that all of God’s children might be drawn closer to His love and to know of His presence. We especially seek God’s healing presence amidst the coronavirus pandemic. We have been given abundant opportunities to lift one another in prayer, and we are made increasingly mindful of the needs of our brothers and sisters around the world. We pray for spiritual and physical needs to be met, and we are thankful for God’s presence through it all. We place our trust in our Loving Father. We trust in His faithfulness, His promises, and His sacrifice for each of us.



On Palm Sunday, we will virtually celebrate Christ’s triumphal entrance into Jerusalem. We’ll share in the music of praise, the Words of our Lord, and special words of healing through a solo offering of Sandi Patty’s “The Day He Wore My Crown.” Join us online for one combined worship service on April 5th at 9:00 a.m.

Our walk through Lent will conclude with the observance of Christ’s sacrifice for the sins of the world and for the lives of His children. The Maundy Thursday service will be held on April 9th at 7:00 p.m., and if our virtual camera lighting cooperates, it will enlighten our service of darkness. The service will include a powerfully depictive organ work by Keith Chapman, “*De Profundis*” (“Out of the Depths”).

On Easter Sunday, April 12th, our Easter Worship Celebration will be held online at 9:00 a.m. and will include traditional Easter hymns and liturgy blended with some HolyGrounds CoffeeHouse music, including Mercy Me’s “Best News Ever,” “He Is Risen, Indeed” and Is Lord of All!



Coming Events

- May 10 Mother's Day
- May 31 Pentecost
- June 22-26 Montlure Traveling Day Camp Summer 2020
- June 28-July 3 Mission Trip to Tseyi Bidaa Presbyterian Church in Del Muerto, Arizona

Humoresque

"The One whose throne is in heaven sits laughing." - Psalm 2:4

Last year, the Lord returned unto Noah and said: "Once again, the earth has become wicked and over-populated, and I see the end of all flesh before me." "Build another ark and save 2 of every living thing along with a few good humans." He gave Noah the blueprints, saying: "You have 6 months to build the ark before I will start the unending rain for 40 days and 40 nights." Six months later, the Lord looked down and saw Noah weeping in his yard - but no ark. "Noah!," He roared, "I'm about to start the rain! Where is the ark?" "Forgive me, Lord," begged Noah, "but things have changed." "I needed a building permit." "I've been arguing with the boat inspector about the need for a sprinkler system." "My neighbors claim that I've violated the neighborhood by-laws by building the ark in my backyard and exceeding the height limitations. We had to go to the local Planning Committee for a decision." "Then the local Council and the electric company demanded a shed load of money for the future costs of moving power lines and other overhead obstructions, to clear the passage for the ark's move to the sea. I told them that the sea would be coming to us, but they would hear none of it." "Getting the wood was another problem. There's a ban on cutting local trees in order to save the Greater Spotted Barn Owl." "I tried to convince the environmentalists that I needed the wood to save the owls - but no go!" "When I started gathering the animals the ASPCA took me to court. They insisted that I was confining wild animals against their will. They argued the accommodations were too restrictive and it was cruel and inhumane to put so many animals in a confined space." "Then the Environmental Protection Agency ruled that I couldn't build the ark until they'd conducted an environmental impact study on your proposed flood." "The trade unions say I can't use my sons. They insist I have to hire only Union workers with ark-building experience." "To make matters worse, the IRS seized all my assets, claiming I'm trying to leave the country illegally with endangered species." "So, forgive me, Lord, but it would take at least 10 years for me to finish this ark." "Suddenly the skies cleared, the sun began to shine, and a rainbow stretched across the sky." Noah looked up in wonder and asked, "You mean you're not going to destroy the world?" "No," said the Lord. "The governments beat me to it." [from Carol Gerlach]

A Moment for Stewardship

Though our campus is temporarily closed, the people of FPC Mesa continue to do God's work. The staff provides an online worship experience and devotionals each week. We still pursue our mission in the community and in the world. Our Deacons serve and support our congregational members and our Elders lead our committees and commissions. We continue to pay our staff and honor our contracts with small businesses. And our members and friends make their best effort to maintain their tithes and offerings.

We have seen examples of faithful stewardship this past month right here in our own congregation. Many families are using online giving through FPC Mesa's website. Some have set up bill pay with their banks to send their offering. Others have consistently mailed their gifts to the church office. Last week a husband and wife donated the remaining ten months of their annual pledge to support the ministry and mission of our church. Sensing the current need, another couple offered their stimulus checks above and beyond their current giving. Prayerfully consider what you can do to help keep our church strong and healthy!

Thank you,
Brent Gregory,
Stewardship and Finance Elder

DISCIPLESHIP

Min. of Faith Formation — Chris McKee
Adult (E) — Karen Rudin
Discipleship (D) – Anita Ramsey

Children's Ministries (E) — Stephanie Gerlach
Family Ministries (E) — Ellen Hickey

Youth/Young Adult (E) — Kyle Harding
Youth Elder – Will Snitzer

April Faith Formation Happenings

One Great Hour of Sharing Offering

At Eastertime FPC participates in "One Great Hour of Sharing" (OGHS). This special offering supports three wonderful Presbyterian efforts:

- Self-Development of People: to loosen the bonds of injustice
- Presbyterian Hunger Program: to share bread with the hungry
- Presbyterian Disaster Assistance: disaster relief around the globe, including COVID-19 Pandemic

Since we are worshipping virtually we are inviting the kids (or those kids at heart) to create their own fish bank this year. We have provided OGHS coloring pages on our website's Discipleship resource page as noted below. You are encouraged to recycle a container and decorate with the provided coloring page(s). Please feel free to submit a picture of your OGHS Fish Bank creation and email to chris@fpcmesa.org. We will post the submissions on our website to vote on and announce the most creative design in the May newsletter. Depending upon submissions received, we will most likely have three creative categories: Children, Youth and Adults. Please be generous as well as creative with your Fish Banks. Let the fun begin!

Faith Formation Resources

During this time of social distancing we have provided numerous resources including written and video devotions for all ages to enjoy on our church's website: <https://fpcmesa.org/discipleship>

Free Online Movie Opportunity, *The Pilgrim's Progress*

Based on John Bunyan's epic masterpiece, *The Pilgrim's Progress* is one of the most popular books of all time, and one of the most important stories of our faith! Second to the Bible in total copies and translations, the story was written by John Bunyan, a pastor imprisoned for sharing his faith. This powerful allegory helps families understand the spiritual journey is the most important journey in life, as well as the importance of sticking to the path, even when the journey gets difficult. Rated (PG), Recommended for ages 8 and up. To access simply go to link below through April 30 and enter my email: chris@fpcmesa.org

<https://www.revelationmedia.com/watchpilgrims/>



Online Youth Platform (Junior and Senior High)

I have created a private youth page on Facebook for youth and parents to connect. Please contact Chris to get an invitation. I am open for suggestions for other platforms to use as well, such as Goggle Hangout. In the meantime, I am connecting with the youth via group texting, so please contact me to include your youth.

Youth Sunday Postponed

Hey Youth, just wanted to get the word out, we postponed the April 19th youth worship until a time when we are back in the sanctuary. We wanted to keep everyone safe during this time of social distancing. In the meantime, any youth who wants to contribute remotely with our virtual worship services, please let Chris know.

In Christ,

Chris McKee
Minister of Faith Formation
chris@fpcmesa.org

Montlure Camp Update

Dear Friends and Partners in Ministry,

We know this is a difficult time, for everyone. We also understand that for many churches and youth groups this is a difficult time to connect with their children/youth.

While we hope and pray you are finding meaningful ways to connect your community together, we also wanted to make sure you are aware that Montlure is here to help, as well.

We are launching different ways for our campers, and friends of campers, future campers, (and anyone else we can help!) to connect virtually. (See below)

Right now, we have two specific ways (below this email) and more will be rolling out in the very near future. Please share this information with your communities and spread the word. We are all navigating and creating "new normals." And we are all learning how to share the love of Christ during this challenging time. We hope we can help you with a small piece of that puzzle.

In addition, Montlure Camp has been processing what our summer will be looking like for 2020. *As soon* as we are able, we will share this with you, and our communities. Just as this is challenging for churches, it is challenging for camps everywhere. Our camps are scheduled to start in 9 short weeks. Please include us in your prayers as we make the best decisions we can, with the information we have, at the time we have it.

Blessings to you all, and please reach out if there are other ways we can support your ministries and efforts connecting your children, youth, and families.

Please scroll below to see our current virtual activities and blurbs you can use in newsletters or other communication, and remember, we are all in this together.

Kellie von Borstel
Montlure Camp Director



Montlure Morning Camp Energizers

We understand school has moved to "remote learning" styles and it can be hard to create new schedules. We want to help you wake up and prepare for your day! Please set reminders on your calendars to join us for just 10 minutes on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at 8:30am. We will do a Montlure Camp energizer, a small faith challenge, and a morning prayer. Join us on zoom at: <https://zoom.us/j/309020100>. Please get the latest news regarding Montlure 2020 Camps at: <https://www.montlure.org/covid-19/>

Montlure Traveling Day Camp Summer 2020

Families with children completing K-5th grades: Mark your calendars now and SAVE THESE DATES! JUNE 22-26, 2020. FPC Mesa is hosting and partnering with other East Valley Presbyterian congregations to bring Montlure to the Valley! Registration is now open online: <https://montlure.campbrainregistration.com> If you're interested in volunteering, please contact Chris.

Montlure Overnight Camp Dates Summer 2020

Senior High: June 7-12

Junior High: June 14-19

Juniors: July 5-9

Registration is open online: <https://montlure.campbrainregistration.com>

Partial church scholarships are available. Please see the church website for details.

April Birthdays



Michael Gerlach
Roma Naccarato
Dan Sitzler
Susan Durand
Jessica Reeves
Donna Gordon
Jeanne Partida
Tanya Snitzer
Allan Schultz
Jo Wilson
Amy Woods

2nd
4th
6th
8th
8th
9th
9th
12th
12th
12th

Sedona Verch 13th
Patricia White 13th
Andy Chesko 15th
Kelly Clark 15th
Hal Engman 15th
Robert Harding 15th
Ron Payton 15th
Deborah Rosen 16th
Dave Weaver 16th
David Frederick 19th
Mary Martin 19th
Don Wilson 19th
Chelsea Cronenberg 29th

Editor's Note: If your birthday is missing or we have the wrong date, please call the office so we can update our records. We wish a special day to anyone we have missed.

Session met via Zoom (an electronic meeting platform) on Sunday afternoon and decided unanimously to continue their previous plan of closure of the church campus until further notice. This means that no activities or programs will occur on our church campus for the time being, with the exception of our Food Pantry with continued weekly delivery on Friday mornings (this is a valid exemption of the stay home order).

The church office is officially closed and staff are working from home. The church phone is being forwarded Monday – Thursday from 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. You can continue to call or email the church staff, and we will respond in a timely manner.

We will continue to offer online worship from our sanctuary as long as needed. If safety necessitates that we can no longer be in the sanctuary, we will need to take that action. For now, however, we understand that it is normalizing and comforting to “be” virtually in the sanctuary for worship, and we appreciate your positive and encouraging feedback on the worship experience, as this is new territory for all of us! Upcoming worship services include Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, and Easter Sunday!

Please continue to check our website regularly for resources for worship and discipleship. We are also posting devotional videos on our website and FaceBook pages, and we hope you are finding those helpful and meaningful for your spiritual life and growth during this time.

We also are very grateful for those of you who are able to maintain your pledge during this time, and we understand that many have been hit hard financially and are not able to do so. Since all activities are currently shut down, this means a loss of income from our rental agreements, which has a negative impact on our church budget. Please see the note from Brent Gregory, Elder for Finance, and the Finance Committee elsewhere in this newsletter for more information regarding that concern.

May God be with you and bless you all in the days to come

~ Ann

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