

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF OLYMPIA

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Non-Profit
Organization
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Olympia WA
Permit No. 198

Return Service Requested

*Do not be anxious
about anything,
but in every situation,
by prayer and petition,
with thanksgiving,
present your requests
to God.*

Phillipians 4:6



May
2020

WINDOWS

Spiritual Challenges in the Midst of Covid-19

Our spiritual growth is often tied to the programs and opportunities that the church creates and provides within the church building. But what are we to do when we cannot gather at a central location? How can we grow in our faith if we cannot be in Pastor Sam's class on Sunday mornings? I really miss interacting with others when it comes to bible study or talking about the Pastor's sermon! What to do, in the midst of a global pandemic, to keep being stretched, molded and shaped into the person God wants me to be? Here's a few reminders.

Take advantage of what we are currently doing. Be a part of the worship experience every Sunday, at 10 a.m., on Facebook Live. Through song, scripture and the sermon, there are challenges and opportunities to ponder how scripture may intersect with your life. For those who do not feel comfortable with Facebook, you can go onto the church website, www.fbcolympia.org, where you will find a recording of the worship service that you can access any time of day. We are also providing Bible Study on Thursday mornings at 10:00 a.m., on Facebook Live. Pastor Mark has been walking us through the book of Jeremiah, Chapters 30-33. He will continue to offer this study into the month of June.

Additionally, the website has an Inspirations page where there are activities for families to do together as well as child-appropriate lessons and helps. We rotate these offerings every couple of weeks to keep things fresh. There are also music videos that connect heart and soul together, for those who also grow in their faith through song. We are also looking at other ways to encourage you through the website. However, if technology is not your friend, you can do it the old-fashioned way. Pick up your Bible, pick a book, and start with a word of prayer and then read it for 20 minutes. Then do some reflecting on what you read. Did it raise any questions, or tension within you? Did you identify with a specific person/character? Do you find the scripture intersected, in some way, with what you are going through right now, today? If so, how so? You can also dedicate yourself to reading a couple of Psalms each day, until you have read all 150 of them. See what they teach you about faith, prayer, etc. Read bible stories about Jesus to your children and talk about what they hear from the story.

That gives you some ideas and suggestions of how you can spend some intentional time with God and God's Spirit as you grow and mature as a Jesus-follower, in the midst of Covid-19.

Blessings and Joy!

Pastor Mark



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Mark's Meanderings

By the time you read this, we will be on week 7 of our Covid-19, "shelter-in-place," world. Seven weeks of not being able to gather together, face-to-face, for worship, bible study, ministry groups, choir and our assorted board & committee meetings. No one is quite sure when the restrictions in place will start to ease up. There are so many variables to consider, from testing capabilities to a reliable vaccine. Even then, you, as an individual, will need to decide for yourself, what parameters need to be in place so that you feel safe and not compromised. The unknown question that comes to my mind is:

What will the new normal look like?

Most of us have probably pondered some kind of response to such a question. Since we are Baptists, after all, I'm sure there are a wide-variety of opinions. In the meantime, as we wait to discover what life will look like on the other side of this pandemic, there are a couple of lessons we have learned, I think. First, the building may be closed, but the "church" is always open. This pandemic has reminded us that you and I, we the people, are the church. The building is a wonderful luxury as well as a vital base of operation for what we do as a community of faith. However, it is flesh and blood people who make up the Body of Christ. We go about the good work of mission and ministry whether we gather in a sanctuary, are forced to "shelter-in-place," or treat those around us, in the midst of our everyday activities, with kindness, compassion and love. Again, WE are the church of Jesus Christ. What a challenge, a blessing, and a responsibility.

Second, we have discovered that technology can be our friend! We are blessed to have resources and access to the technology that provides us a different way to stay connected. Facebook Live, Zoom, Google Hangouts, Vimeo and other platforms give us a wide-variety of options to provide opportunities for ministry to you. Our worship "attendance" has been around 130 from our FB Live Worship Broadcasts. Those who aren't Facebook users, experience worship through our Vimeo platform on the church website, fbcolympia.org. One of the questions I have been hearing from some of you is whether we will continue broadcasting worship live, once we are allowed to start gathering again in large groups for worship? The short answer is, yes! This type of technology allows for family, friends and former members of the church, who live outside of Thurston County, to be a part of the worship experience. It provides another but different connection of access, relationship, with those who cannot attend on a regular basis because of health, work schedules, etc.

The last thing, this covid-19 world has reinforced one of our primary Baptist tenets: The Priesthood of all Believers. Between church staff, the work of the Deacon Board and you as a congregation, people are being looked after, prayed for, encouraged, etc. Cards, notes, emails, text messages, phone calls, FaceTime, people to people connection is happening. Is it perfect? No. Face-to-face is always preferred, given a choice, but ALL OF US are working at making sure people are not feeling the full effect of this "shelter-in-place," world. That despite this extended time of isolation, we can still be the church for one another and that responsibility and honor is not dependent on one or two "official" people. As your pastor, I say, "well done, good and faithful servants and friends!"

Going forward, know that we are working, praying, pondering and planning for that day(s) when our new normal starts to come into focus more clearly. The Executive Council met in April, using Zoom, and extended Pastor Dave, one more month of being part of our staff as an Interim Pastor. His wisdom, counsel and leadership have been a blessing to all of us. We have seen an *encouraging uptick in giving* after a really rough start in January and February. I think that speaks to the optimism you feel about the future and your present experience of God's Spirit, even though we cannot gather face to face. I would encourage you to remain faithful! As scripture reminds us, even in the midst of exile, God promises restoration and new life. Be faithful, be encouraged, know you are seen, cared for and loved by a God who holds arms out and wide-open to receive you where you are at. May all of us Walk Humbly, Love Completely, and Live Differently, today, tomorrow and each and every day we are given life and breath.

Blessings and Joy!

Pastor Mark

Pastor Dave's Ponderings

Pastor Dave's Thoughts Along the WAY ...

"Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For yours is the kingdom and
the power and the glory forever. Amen."

The Lord's Prayer, or The Disciples' Prayer, probably is repeated more than any other in the Christian world. Most frequently cited from Matthew 6:9-13, it's Jesus' response to the disciples' request for guidance in prayer.

Most of you have probably heard sermons on the different phrases in the prayer. How do you think about what Jesus said in light of the circumstances in which we're living these days? I'd like to offer some brief thoughts here.

Roman Catholics call this prayer the "Our Father" because of the beginning. This reminds us that Jesus invited us to be up close and personal with God, using the term "Father". These days some may feel more comfortable using the term "Parent" either because of bad experiences associated with "father" or because of the gender-specific nature of the word when God is more than just masculine.

"Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." How do you view the kingdom of God? Is it a place where there is no more sin, death, disease, suffering, corruption, injustice, or evil?

This is a challenging phrase. What's my role in bringing the attributes of the kingdom of God into play in the world in which we live? Especially when we live with "Stay home! Stay safe!"

"Give us our daily bread." This is certainly a prayer for now, what with millions of people out of work and businesses questioning whether they will be able to hang on long enough to see light at the end of all this.

But we choose to follow Jesus who told us, "For I was hungry and you gave me food." (Matt. 25:35) We must always act to ensure that those around us are able to have enough. It's the responsibility of those who have enough to help those who don't.

Every Sunday Table Grace is providing sack lunches to anyone who comes. The resources of Nancy's Room are being used to provide assistance to those who come to the attention of the Olympia Police Department's *Friendly Faces* outreach efforts.

We have people in the congregation who have volunteered to do grocery shopping or pick up prescriptions if needed.

Yet there also needs to be a systemic response to hunger and homelessness. Perhaps our prayers need to be for our governmental leaders to have wisdom and insight in addressing these needs.

"Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."

How do you view the kingdom of God?

This can certainly be taken on a personal level. But how does it work on a societal level when student loans are astronomically high; when people have lost jobs because of the economic shut down due to the coronavirus and have mortgage payments due? We Americans are steeped in credit card debt. How will the banks respond? How do we find justice for all in the midst of this crisis?

I seem to have used up my space. I leave it to you to think about the last two phrases/thoughts of the prayer.

May we not lose one another in this time of physical isolation, that we might once again gather together to worship our God.