

THE GOOD NEWS



September 2020

Formerly Princeton Presbyterian Church * A PC (USA) Congregation
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Kaleidoscope Time



Have you ever played with a kaleidoscope? You hold the tube fitted with lenses, mirrors and bits of colored glass or plastic to your eye and twist the tube. You see the colored flakes inside, but they're just a lump with no real pattern you can see. As you twist, first one bit of color and then another breaks loose and shifts. There are changes, but still no pattern. And then, all at once, several pieces change and a pattern appears, new and symmetrical and beautiful, like a colored translucent snowflake.

We are in a kaleidoscope season. In March, a lot of pieces of our lives shifted all at once to form a lump but not a pattern. Over the last several months, little pieces have continued to shift and drop, one at a time. We are living through a time of changing patterns in our lives, our church, our world. We learned to work from home, to worship and shop online, to remember to grab the face mask on the way out the door, to connect with family and friends in new and creative ways. Some of us just wish we could go back to the way things were in the past – that is to say, in February. That's not possible. That pattern is gone forever.

Little by little, though, pieces of a new pattern fall into place. We've seen that at home and work, as a new rhythm of work and leisure, solitude and community comes into being. We've seen that at church as Zoom worship begins to develop into hybrid worship and our teams and task forces come up with plans and strategies for how to do the work of Christ in a changed environment. September, the month when things usually spring into action for programs and missions, this year is a time when things are still somewhat uncertain. The pieces for the new pattern, the new normal, are moving and developing but are not yet fully in place.

Where is God in this? This is a time of uncertainty, but also a time of great opportunity for creativity. God finds joy in creative work, in bringing form out of chaos and light out of darkness. God is at work among us, putting in place the pieces for a new pattern, a pattern that fits the new reality. God is at work in our session, deacons and teams as we try to hash out a way forward. God is at work among us, strengthening relationships through worship, Bible study, movie nights and Zoom meetings, phone calls and emails and cards. God is at work within us, changing each of us to be a part of God's new pattern, a pattern of light and beauty. It takes patience. It takes work. It takes prayer. But God's new pattern is falling into place.

Peace,

Pam



Re-Opening Update

As we prepare to re-open our building for use by our own congregation and outside groups, we have been guided by some key questions:

- What is safe in light of the current state of the COVID-19 pandemic in our area?
- What is faithful to our call as Christians to worship God and serve our neighbor?
- What will build community and enable the most people to worship and stay connected?

Those factors all feed in to the many decisions to be made as we make plans to re-open.

The Re-opening Task Force has been hard at work. Protocols for the use of the building by outside groups have been developed, approved by session and shared with the groups currently using the building. At this time, that consists of the Tuesday and Friday AA meetings. Other groups are being cautious about resuming in-person gatherings and may begin to meet later in September.

Guidelines and a Covenant for those who plan to come to in-person worship have also been developed. We are in the process of making alterations to our worship space, including roping off pews, removing hymnals and Bibles, setting up stations for hand-sanitizer and creating signs for new procedures. We are also making alterations to our worship service to include less singing while still including music and safe procedures for communion. We need to re-vamp our schedules for ushers and liturgists. The role of usher will be changing, as they will be the gate-keepers for those entering worship. Training for ushers will be developed.

The piece of the task force's work that is most challenging is a technological challenge. We are committed to worship that continues to include those who are unable or uncomfortable with in-person worship. Our hope is to be able to continue to Zoom rather than livestream so we can continue to see each others' faces and have some level of interaction. Some necessary equipment like a video camera that is also a webcam is on order. Once we have the equipment we will begin to experiment with what will work during the month of September. Some of that experimentation will happen in test meetings, but some may happen during worship on Sunday mornings. We're interested in your feedback on what works and what doesn't.

What is the timeline for when we will start in-person worship along with our virtual worship? There are two factors in play. One factor is our own readiness. With any luck, we should have the building ready, procedures in place and shared with you, and volunteers trained by mid-September. The second factor is the safety of gathering at this point in the pandemic. We are watching the numbers of cases in our area carefully. Currently the hope is to gather in-person as well as online by that mid-September target. However, if numbers begin to go up again that may change. So continue to watch this space!



SEPTEMBER WORSHIP

We will continue online worship only with Zoom and Facebook Live for at least September 6 and 13. We plan to (almost) definitely be worshipping in our new hybrid format by Sunday, October 4, which is World Communion Sunday. As soon as plans for September 20 and 27 are complete, we will communicate with you promptly and completely. Regardless of the location, the scripture, sermon and special events for the month will be as follows:

Sunday, September 6 – Labor Day Weekend

10 a.m. Worship on Zoom and Facebook Live
Claire Jones Preaching
Communion

Sunday, September 13

10 a.m. Worship on Zoom and FaceBook Live
Matthew 18:21-35 – “What Does Forgiveness Look Like?”

Sunday, September 20

10 a.m. Worship
Matthew 20: 1-16 – “Fair Pay”

Sunday, September 27

10 a.m. Worship
Matthew 21: 23-32 – “Who’s on First?”

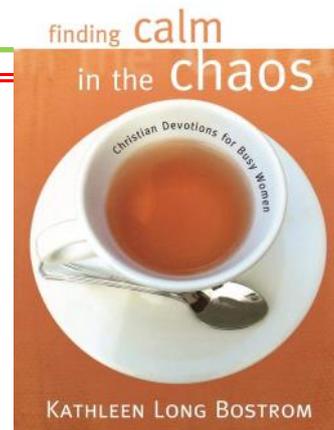
Zoom Bible Study
Finding Faith

ZOOM BIBLE STUDY

Our weekly Zoom bible study has been one of the great success stories of the COVID-19 season at Tree of Life Church. Each week about a dozen people have gathered to learn from one another as they study God’s word. Leadership has been shared among the participants. The conversation is always lively and thoughtful. It has been a blessing and a lifeline during a season when we are cut off from so much of “normal” church life.

In September, this group will be going through some good changes. First, the meeting date is changing from Wednesday to Thursday evening at 7 p.m. to allow more people to participate. Our first Thursday night gathering will be Thursday, September 10. Second, we’re starting a new book that will lead us into studying the Bible and growing deeper in faith in a different way. The book is *Finding Calm in the Chaos* by Kathleen Long Bostrom. Each week, we will focus on one Bible passage and reflect on it in a different way each day, through essays, prayers and poetry. This study will work best if you read the book as a daily devotion, but it will also work if you simply read the Bible passage and then join in the discussion. This is an opportunity to deepen your prayer life as well as your knowledge. We hope you’ll join us!

Here’s a link to find the book on Amazon: https://www.amazon.com/Finding-Calm-Chaos-Christian-Devotions/dp/0664229166/ref=sr_1_1?crd=IK8BIV4X50NG&dchild=1&keywords=finding+calm+in+the+chaos&qid=1598473542&s=books&sprefix=Finding+calm+in+the+chaos%2Caps%2C149&sr=1-1



LOOKING AHEAD FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

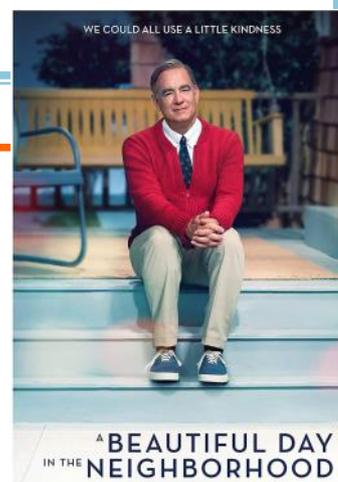


It's a strange year for parents and kiddos. Everything keeps changing – and that will be the case at church as well. But we haven't forgotten about the younger ones in our church. Here's the current plan: Once we go back to in-person worship, children are encouraged to come to worship with their parents. We have some special roles for them to fill in leading worship. There will also be individual activity boxes and children's bulletins for each child to keep them engaged and growing in faith.

Since our middle-school students are missing out on so many other in-person activities, we'll be trying an in-person Youth Group for them twice a month that will include fun and service opportunities. The small group will meet outdoors while the weather is good, and wear masks to keep everyone safe. If you want to bring a friend, please check with group leaders first. Parents, look for more on both in-church and youth activities soon.

“A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood”

TV's Mister Rogers was a quiet, calming voice for children (and adults) in a television-land filled with loud noise and lots of commercials. He took on difficult topics in a gentle way that led to understanding. “A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood”, a 2019 movie starring Tom Hanks, tells the real life story of the friendship between Fred Rogers and journalist Lloyd Vogel with a powerful message about forgiveness.



“A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood” will be the movie for our next Outside Movie Night on Friday, September 4 at 7:30 p.m. If you missed it in the movie theaters, here's your chance to enjoy it with other Presbyterians. (Mr. Rogers was a Presbyterian minister, you know!) Wear your mask, bring a chair and a snack and join us for a lovely evening in the neighborhood! Friends are welcome, pre-registration appreciated as we are trying to manage group size. To pre-register email treeoflifepc@gmail.com. Rain date is Saturday, September 5 at 7:30 p.m.



**Our Community Cup
Coffeehouse**

OUR COMMUNITY CUP COFFEEHOUSE

Our Community Cup continues to gather on Fridays, but in different ways than we used to. On September 4 and 18 we will have outside movie nights at Tree of Life Church. (see above). On September 11 and 25 we will gather on Zoom at 4:30 p.m. to check in with each other and have some fun. We're beginning to look ahead to a “new normal” for Our Community Cup, but we aren't there yet. A task force looking at our disability ministry has been formed and will be meeting soon for the first time. The task force is made up of people from our church and from the Our Community Cup community. That task force will guide us as we think about needs and new directions for this ministry.



SEPTEMBER:

- 8 ~ Louise DelloBuono
- 14 ~ Mary Stevens
- 16 ~ Seth Vail
- 28 ~ Jason Logan
- 28 ~ Rachel Richardson



To my church family and friends of Tree of Life

I want to thank all of you for the many prayers that got me through my surgery which went very well without any complications. Thanks for those who signed up for meal train. I'm being fed very well and being spoiled and love it. The get well wishes I've received are so uplifting and appreciated. TREE OF LIFE, YOU ARE THE BEST!



Love Carolyn

A BABY SHOWER

On Sunday, August 16 we had our first congregational in-person event since the COVID-19 shut down began – a drive-through baby shower for Kate McShane. Although it was billed as a drive-through, many people stopped to chat, just glad to see each other after and catch up after so many months. Kate says, “Thank you so much to the deacons and Debby Richardson for arranging the shower and to all of you who were so generous and thoughtful with your gifts. I felt surrounded by your love and upheld by your support. I’m so grateful for my church family. You helped make the world a welcoming, caring place for our baby.” The shower came just in time – Kate and Seth’s baby, Violet Vivienne Vail, was born on August 24. Congratulations and blessings to all!



Reverend Mrs. Pamela McShane, Pastor
Christine Laquintano, Director of Music

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Upcoming Events:

Thursday, Sept. 3, 7 p.m. - Re-opening Task Force on Zoom
Friday, Sept. 4, 7:30 p.m. - Movie Night "A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood"
Sunday, Sept. 6, 10 a.m. Worship on Zoom and Facebook Live, Communion
Monday, Sept. 7 - Labor Day
Tuesday, Sept. 8, 7 p.m. - Session on Zoom
Thursday, Sept. 10, 7 pm - Bible Study on Zoom
Friday, Sept. 11 - 4:30 p.m. - Our Community Cup on Zoom
Sunday, Sept. 13, 10 a.m. - Worship on Zoom and Facebook Live
Thursday, Sept. 17, 7 pm - Bible Study on Zoom
Friday, Sept. 18, 7:30 p.m. - Movie Night
Sunday, Sept. 20, 10 a.m. Worship
11:15 a.m.. Deacons
Tuesday, Sept. 22, 7 p.m. - Nurture Faith on Zoom
Thursday, Sept. 24, 7 pm - Bible Study on Zoom
Friday, Sept. 25, 4:30 p.m. - Our Community Cup on Zoom
Sunday, Sept. 27, 10 a.m. Worship

