

Saint Giles Presbyterian Church
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June 10, 2020

Friends -

About a month ago (in the May 11/13 mini-newsletter), I shared some of *my* thoughts about when we might gather in-person to worship at Saint Giles. I included my thoughts about for what I think most folks long:

- I think folks long for real connection and genuine fellowship - to sit near those they love and have time to talk, listen and linger with a cup of coffee or glass of lemonade.
- I think folks long for familiar - whether that means how we enter and depart the sanctuary or how we share the peace, gather for the Time with Children, celebrate communion or pass offering plates.
- I think folks long for music - listening to music and making music. I think folks want congregational singing.

And I trust folks want to be - and feel - safe. I trust folks want to gather in ways that protect the health of our faith community. I trust folks are committed to ensuring (as much as we can) we are not putting members of our faith community at risk.



Recently, I invited each person on Session to share their ideas about a timeline for relaunching in-person worship at Saint Giles. Their individual recommendations encompass a wide continuum that can be sorted into the following general categories:

1. When we have a vaccine
2. Align with WCPSS (if the schools open in August, we could open in August)
3. Follow the recommendations of our North Carolina officials/when NC reaches Stage 3
4. Soon (sooner rather than later) with alternating pews/social distancing, spaced/paced entry & exit, limited singing (only a soloist), the possibility of outdoor (socially distanced) fellowship and an at-home option for folks who are not ready to return to corporate worship

The vast majority of the June Stated Session meeting will be dedicated to discussing options and prayerfully considering what sort of timetable is in the best interest of our faith community. On behalf of Session, I welcome your prayers as we listen to one another, acknowledge the continuum of ideas and work to discern the way forward.

Peace,
Katherine

Pentecost in Our Lives

In view of an extraordinary, global virus combined with historic economic issues and now significant protests against racism, a dark chapter in our history since its founding, I feel that God is not just present but most active in our lives. Where there is fear, injustice, grief and despair; that is where you find God.

Years ago in a time of despair for me, a friend sent me a note followed by Psalm 27, verse 1, which said “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?” Those words have been a guidepost for most of my lifetime and I see them particularly relevant for all of us in today’s environment. No matter how difficult the situation, God calls on us to discard our fears, trust in him and love one another. That is what I see in the current protests, in the heroic efforts by our healthcare personnel, in frontline providers who are working long hours for our safety and hurting financially, and not the least in our church community who have worked diligently to keep our spiritual wellbeing alive and well. Special thanks to Katherine, Eddie, Mona, Patty and Dave who have reminded us of how much we love our church and the worship services provided there. Also, I am most grateful to those who have called me on several occasions to ask about my health during my cancer treatments which are going quite well thus far.

It is said that music cleanses our souls, and my how I miss singing at church! The Sunday podcasts are a welcomed substitute, and I am a regular visitor to YouTube where singing “You are Worthy” several times a week is a treasured time for me.

Blessings to all and prayers for when we come together again,
Joe Moody

Seven Things We Should Do To Respond To Racism

In her sermon for June 7, Katherine outlined seven things we should be doing in these days and times. Here is an excerpt from that sermon:

With that clarity about who I am - about my privilege - here are a few suggestions about what I think we, as primarily white, educated, middle-to-upper class folks *should* be doing in this supremely messed-up, living nightmare, actual terror of today.



1. We should **listen** to our siblings of color - paying full attention - setting aside every tendency to minimize, discount or jump ahead in our minds. Listen to their experience, their feelings, their trauma, their pain. Listen. Just listen.
2. We should **be curious** - genuinely curious about our siblings of color - ask open-ended, meaningful questions that don't circle back around to be about us. Then refer to #1: Listen.

3. We should **invite** siblings of color to the tables where we have influence. We should invite siblings of color to take our place at the tables where we have influence. Give up some power. Get out of the way. Invite, insist on, others.
4. We should **act**. Do what you can do confront and combat racism. Remember there's more than one way to do this. Protest, organize, advocate, counsel, create, pray. Discern which one you are called to do and take action.
5. We should **identify racism** when we encounter it. That inappropriate joke? Name it. That not-so-quiet comment? Point it out. The omission on the invitation list? Speak up. Bigotry? Challenge it. Profiling? Confront it. It's not okay to "let it slide." It's not acceptable to "look the other way." If you hear racism, if you see racism, if you encounter racism, identify it.
6. We should **take-on discomfort**. Discomfort is the place for growth. Being uncomfortable is the path of change. Find what level of discomfort you can tolerate. Consider taking on a little bit more.
7. We should **know our blindspots**. There are things we do not know - things we unlikely to notice - about ourselves. Things we can't see that others see with ease. Hidden stuff that impacts our beliefs and informs our actions. Know your blindspots. Work on them.

There's more - there's a lot more we should be doing, but these seven are a start, a first step. A first step toward shifting - fixing - this supremely messed-up, living nightmare, actual terror of today. A first step toward getting *from here to there*, from *this kingdom* to God's Kingdom. A first step toward realizing God's vision for *a kingdom in which* resources are shared and everyone's first name is Beloved, *a kingdom defined by* care and compassion, by honesty and humility, a kingdom recognized by unconditional regard and unconditional love, *a kingdom about which* we can all - ALL - join voices to proclaim: "It is good. It is very good. Indeed, it is supremely good."

Photo by Markus Spiske on Unsplash

Giving Update – Thank You!

From the Finance & Stewardship Ministry Team and the Treasurer –

Many, many thanks to those of you who have kept you giving up to date. Your ongoing support is vital during these challenging times so that we can continue to pay our wonderful staff and support our benevolences including Step-Up, Urban Ministries, YMCA and others. Your support truly makes a difference. Donations can be made via mailing a check to the Church office, calling Dave Gospodarek (919-880-5618) to make a credit card payment or using Venmo if you have an account.

Thank you.

The Congregational Nominating Committee

On behalf of the yet-to-be trained Congregational Nominating Committee (CNC), we invite you to prayerfully consider who God may be calling to serve as leaders/elders at Saint Giles.

The CNC will be asked to identify five Elders (Members of Session). We will most likely need two elders to serve in our Roots Division (Administration & Staff and Finance/Stewardship) and three elders to serve in our Tree Division.

Please send your ideas to Emmie (office@saintgiles.org) who will compile a list of suggestions for the CNC.

If you need assistance with shopping or other errands, please contact Emmie (office@saintgiles.org) or Katherine (katherine@saintgiles.org).

If you are able to offer assistance with shopping or other errands, please contact Emmie (office@saintgiles.org) or Katherine (katherine@saintgiles.org).