



The Carriage Stone

June 2020

New Hempstead Presbyterian Church, New City, NY. *The English Church*



“The Carriage Stone” is the Newsletter of
The New Hempstead Presbyterian Church

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What is Hope?

Life is hard right now. We may feel trapped, cabin fever-y. Those family members that we love, and who live with us? Maybe we're tired of them (not me; Howard and I rock along pretty well together). But I hear it in your voices when we talk on the phone—anxiety, fear, exhaustion. And if you take nothing away from this column, I want you to know that what ever you are doing or not doing, it is OK. This is not the time to be in hyper-productive mode; we will get to a point of productivity later.

This is also not the time to give in to despair. We belong to God, and God will never let us go. This is both present reality and resurrection hope.

That's an interesting word—hope. We may say, “I hope it won't rain this Saturday” or, “I hope we will be off of this lock-down soon”. This kind of hope is dependent on the outcome of a situation. It leaves us open to disappointment when it rains, or we are still stuck in our houses.

Biblical hope, especially in the New Testament, is Resurrection hope. Romans 5:1-5 says,

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

This is hope that is rooted, not in the outcome of our expectation, but in God's very self. “Whether we live or we die, we belong to the Lord,” says Paul (Romans 14:8). Christian hope is far deeper and more lasting than hope that is tied to an outcome.

This kind of hope, while a gift of God's grace, takes some growing into. We spend time in prayer, Bible study and meditation as part of growing into it. We also support one another in community to strengthen this hope.

Cynthia Bourgeault, in her book *Mystical Hope*, writes,

Hope is not imaginary or illusory. It is that sonar by which the body of Christ holds together and find it's way. If we, as living members of the body of Christ, can surrender our hearts...and listen for that sonar with all we are worth, it will again guide us, both individually and corporately, to the future for which we are intended. And the body of Christ will live, and thrive, and hold us tenderly in belonging.

This, brothers and sisters, is the hope that doesn't disappoint. Even on lock-down.



Pastor to Take a Stay-cation

Pastor Lori will be on “Stay-Cation” June 1-7. She will record a meditation and Communion Service for Sunday, June 7. She will be available for emergencies only, and will return Monday June 8 having never actually left. File this under “Silly Lock-down Tricks.”



The Work of the Church Continues...

From Bob Philhower

It may feel like mission has paused along with much of life, but the work of the church continues and many of the organizations we have supported continue to work in our community.

The Martin Luther King Multi-Purpose Center in Spring Valley, which we have supported with peacemaking offerings, is offering free Covid-19 antibody testing from June 1–12.

Call 833-422-7369 for an appointment.

ALL ARE WELCOME, REGARDLESS OF INSURANCE OR IMMIGRATION STATUS.

Soup Angels continues to provide food at the First Reformed Church in Nyack. We have supported them financially and as volunteers. While sit-down meal service has been paused, a growing number of people come by for hot meals served to-go. Last time I was there, each person received an entrée of chicken, pasta and peas; a salad; a dessert; a bagel + cream cheese for breakfast; and a sandwich. In addition, the

Nyack mask makers have donated masks so anyone who needs one can have one. More information here: [Face Book link to Soup Angels](#) (and you might recognize someone on their profile picture)

Virtual Worship Notes

From Bob Philhower

I trust you have all been able to view our virtual Worship services on YouTube. Last Sunday’s video says it was viewed 54 times. Note that the streaming now starts at 10:55 AM to allow for the meditation time during the prelude.

Next Sunday, June 4, is a Communion Sunday. Remember that the Session and PCUSA General Assembly have authorized the remote institution of Communion. Have your bread and grape juice ready ahead of time, or pause the video at the appropriate time.

We will be changing our Worship time to 10 AM for summer time starting Sunday, June 21.

Zoom, Zoom, Zoom

From Bob Philhower

I suspect that many of us have been learning to use computer video communication services like Zoom. My family uses Zoom to have family chats and even to play Trivial Pursuit. I have also participated in a Zoom Seder during Passover and mourned the death of a friend’s mom on a Zoom Shiva call.

The church now has a Zoom account. It’s been used for some committee meetings (Presbyterians gotta be Presbyterians) and for some Bible studies.

The Communication Committee met and discussed different ways to have fellowship activities over Zoom, and some should be starting up soon. If you have ideas, please contact me or Jocelyne or Jane or Nora.

From the Synod

[Thanks to Laura Metallo-Bidon for forwarding this message from the Stated Clerk of the Synod of the Northeast to me. The Synod is one of the levels of government in the Presbyterian Church.]

DEAR FRIENDS WHO SHARE THE JOURNEY,

People are hurting all over our nation. This past week the pain erupted into “righteous indignation.” To have seen the life squeezed out of George Floyd by a White policeman was too much -- a video we see played over and over – the last straw so shortly after Ahmaud Arbery was hunted down by two White men and killed in cold blood for jogging while Black, so shortly after Breonna Taylor was shot eight times by police in her own home.

People are hurting all over our nation. And the pain has erupted into outrage. How long, oh God? How long do Black people have to suffer from the coronavirus that embeds itself disproportionately in their communities and kills them in higher numbers? How long do Black mothers have to worry each time their son or daughter goes out that they may not return? How long will Black, Brown and Native parents have to have “the talk” with their sons and daughters without crushing their spirits – to warn them that their life is not valued by many White people; to warn them that they have to be very careful how they move in the world and even then might not be safe? How long, oh God, will White people continue to believe that racism is something that happens to people of color and does not harm themselves in any way?

In my quest for racial justice, I serve on the board of SpiritHouse Project, a nonprofit organization that began documenting state-sanctioned murders of Black people in 2007. By 2015, we had identified between 3,000 and



4,000 Black people from the ages of 1 to 96. They were the sons, daughters, sisters, brothers, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and friends of people who were devastated by their losses. Many family members have not recovered from the trauma of these killings. Their stories were often as painful as that of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, Katherine Johnson, Korryn Gaines, Sandra Bland, and on and on and on. These latest killings continue a long line of injustices. The pain that has erupted is a cry to us all -- “Enough! No More!”

America once again has come face to face with our unresolved, unrelenting, deep-seated problem of racism and racial violence. In 1999, the 211th General Assembly approved a document called “Facing Racism: A Vision of a Beloved Community.” It states, “The PC(USA) affirms that racism violates God’s purpose for humanity and is contrary to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the PC(USA) recognizes that racism is a sin. The PC(USA) is committed to spiritually confronting the idolatry and ideology of White supremacy and White privilege. The PC(USA) confesses its complicity in the creation and maintenance of racist structures and systems in all parts of our nation’s life, including the church itself.”

How quickly we forget our own history! Had we as a church boldly addressed these confessions of 1999 and taken action, we could be in a very different place today. We would have come to understand much earlier that racism is not just a social and societal problem but also one of spiritual malformation. The sin of racism

separates us from God, from each other, and from all aspects of creation.

This Sunday we celebrated Pentecost – a coming together of all peoples and languages in a way that all could be understood. In God’s glory, God created all peoples. Had God intended for us all to be the same, we would be. It is in our differences – our races and ethnicities, our cultures and languages, our foods and clothing, our music, dance, art, and poetry – that we have the opportunity to experience God’s love and God’s creation in its wholeness. Even in the face of outrage in the streets, we still heard stories of people coming together – people who never would have met otherwise having conversations with each other; shop keepers providing drinks and food to the protestors – people cleaning up neighborhoods to help restore the community and show that it is only a few that are intent on destruction—people coming to know their neighbors in new ways.

God calls us as a church and as individuals to go deep and heal this spiritual malformation of racism. PC(USA) has once again given us an opportunity to step out and be faithful to God’s call. The invitation to become a Matthew 25 church or mid-council calls on us to actively engage in the world. Rev. Dr. Diane Moffett, Executive Director and President of the Presbyterian Mission Agency, tells us that we can come together to dismantle structural racism by applying our faith to advocate and break down the systems, practices, and thinking that underlie discrimination, bias and oppression of people of color. Dismantling structural racism calls us to be relevant in our world today, to stand up and be counted, and to be actors in our own destinies.

Yes, structural racism is deep in all of our systems in our nation including the church. However, do not be discouraged. The grace of God is that we are not entrapped in our history. We can begin to change today what we left unchanged yesterday. We can vow to become a Matthew 25 church and see what a difference it makes in other people’s lives and in our own

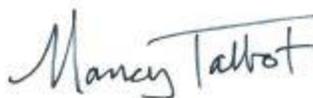
lives. We are all God’s children. God is calling us to be faithful and to love one another as we love ourselves.

Let us embrace this gift of God by making a connection between the faith we profess and how we act in times such as these.

“For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ, we though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us.”

Romans 12: 4-6a

FAITHFULLY,



Nancy Talbot

Stated Clerk & Acting Synod Leader

Millennial Corner

Nora Asamoah

*“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind”
- 2 Timothy 1:7*

Who knew that our world was going to change so drastically? It has been weeks since we last saw each other in church (the building). Like many others, I was fearful when this pandemic began. Fearful for my safety, my family’s safety, friends, neighbors etc. The unknown is always scary, but I was reminded with the above verse that I do not posse the spirit of fear. I was reminded that as a Christian, I have power over fear; this is not an easy task. There are times when fear just overtakes you and there is nothing you can do but pray. Brothers and sisters, we are living in uncertain times but whenever you feel fear creeping up, just recite 2 Timothy 1:7. As you recite it, believe it and receive the peace that comes with it.

Testing the Power of Prayer

Lois sent in this link to a study testing the power of Prayer against COVID-19. I’m going to keep praying either way.

<https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/05/01/849408522/clinical-study-considers-the-power-of-prayer-to-combat-covid-19>

Worship Pictures

Thanks for sending some pictures of yourself at Worship in your home. If you didn't participate, there is still time.

