

From Martha

“The Lentiest Lent I ever Lented.” That was a phrase I ran into a lot during Lent of 2020 when we gave up pretty much everything except what could be found in our grocery stores and on television. Approaching this year’s Lent, when there are lights at the end of our long tunnel, but they still seem a good distance away, we are all conscious of a need for something beyond austerity. Amy Ray suggested that our theme this year be more like that of Advent, which is a season of preparation for the celebration of the birth of Jesus. We could, she suggested, prepare for Easter. It was a good suggestion and that is what we will do.

Then of course, the question becomes, “How do you prepare for Easter?” We can consider preparation for Easter as involving many of the things that we would do to prepare for any celebration—preparing our bodies, changing some behaviors, becoming as healthy as possible in mind, body and spirit. So, we consider getting ready for Easter in several ways:

- How do we prepare our bodies for Easter? Bodies matter to God, they matter to Jesus. How we treat them matters; how we use them matters. How can we attend to our bodies in ways that prepare us to consider resurrection?
- How do we prepare our minds for Easter? God cares what we learn, what we spend time thinking about, how we use our minds; Jesus did, as well. What can we do to focus our minds on things that God considers healthy? How can we seek out wisdom?
- How do we prepare our behaviors for Easter? What are the things we are doing—ways we speak to and about people, ways we let anger out sideways, ways we harm our minds or our bodies—that we can let go of or turn away from to prepare ourselves to receive the good news of the resurrected Christ?
- How do we prepare our spirits for Easter? What are the ways we tend our spirits? Are there practices that make our days more peaceful, that turn our thoughts to God, that would help us recognize how we live in the kingdom of heaven offered by the resurrected Christ?

It is time to be gentle with ourselves and each other, to seek out the things which nourish us and give us peace and let go of things that harm us. For myself, I created a bracelet made up of five colors of thread:

- ◆ Green for green pastures from Psalm 23
- ◆ Blue for still waters and living water from John 4:14
- ◆ Red for sacrifice
- ◆ Black for Ash Wednesday and the reminder that we are dust; for Good Friday, without which there is no Easter
- ◆ White for the breath, wind and spirit of God; for resurrection

The bracelet bothers me and reminds me and challenges me to think of each of those elements of my faith each day. You may have other practices: prayer, scripture reading, singing, reading devotional, walking, yoga, fasting, journaling, painting, dancing, talking with friends. The practice itself is not what matters—it is attending to our bodies, minds, behaviors and spirits that helps us access the kingdom, alive and working, all around us.

On Ash Wednesday we say to each other, “You are dust and to dust you will return.” And then we say, “God go with you on your journey.”



March Worship

Our Congregational Council met on February 14th to discuss many things. One key topic for Sunday was when we return to in-person worship here at Peakland Baptist. Throughout the pandemic, our CC has made these decisions based on the assessment of whether or not numbers were climbing in our area and using the guidelines posted by the Virginia Department of Health and the CDC. They also weigh the needs of our congregation and all of the above were part of the conversation on Sunday. Based on the numbers lowering of new cases in our area and the rising numbers of our people who have been able to get the vaccine, the CC voted to return to in-person worship on March 7th with the following policies in place:

- * Face masks will be required—double face-masking will be encouraged—face masks will also be available at the door
- * Social distancing will be required—we do not expect numbers in our sanctuary to exceed the number of people who can safely be in the room and keep 6' of distance between us
- * For now, we will keep masks on during the entire service; we will still be unable to resume our normal choir program and the normal singing of hymns
- * As the church building will be open again, Sunday School classes will make their own decision, together, about whether and when they will meet
- * The service will continue to be offered on Facebook, YouTube and our website, along with digital copies of sermon by email and print copies to those wanting it printed

The CC also voted to continue to use the services of Jeff Curcio (who has been spending 8-10 hours/week filming and editing our worship while we have been unable to meet in person) for the month of March. The live service will be filmed and the service will be uploaded to our social media sites by 4pm each Sunday. We have had more than 120 people, on average, accessing our worship online—we will continue to offer that access. In addition to worship, we will work to create some supplemental video content, including devotionals and trainings for leadership, that will then be available on our YouTube page.

We have been grateful for each other through this year, for the many ways each of you has continued to support this community financially, personally, and with your prayers.

Finance Update

State of our 2020 Finances

Now that we have concluded the pandemic year of 2020, the Finance Team is reporting to our congregation the financial results for the year ended December 31, 2020 as compared to last year for the same period and our annual budget:

	<u>Dec 2019</u>	<u>Dec 2020</u>	<u>Budget Dec 2020</u>	<u>Actual</u>
Contributions, and other	\$332,208	\$247,220	\$261,720	
Expenses	\$314,662	\$310,120	\$280,600	
<u>Operating (Loss) Income</u>	<u>\$17,546</u>	<u>\$(62,900)</u>	<u>\$(18,880)</u>	
<u>Market Increase-Investments</u>	<u>\$175,898</u>	<u>\$ 0</u>	<u>\$189,633</u>	

Despite services primarily being on-line during the COVID 19 crisis, we have exceeded our budget for contributions this year and we are grateful for that, particularly in this critical time.

Our expenses are below budget because we have deferred most capital projects and canceled special events. However, we have funded all of our regular missions (as well as used some special funds to augment our giving to local missions) and kept all employees. We have ended the year with an operating loss of \$18,880 which is certainly significant, but not crushing.

The market value of our investments ended the year with an increase of almost \$190,000. As you know, we do not consider this spendable cash as we know it is our long-term savings and can be very volatile. Our cash and investments total \$1,400,000 with \$1,056,000 of that total in unrestricted funds.

Our congregation has remained faithful to the church and we are truly grateful! With continued uncertainty ahead, it is imperative that we all continue to remember the church, with our participation, offerings, and prayer.

As always, if you would like more information, you may obtain detailed financial statements from the church office or contact me with questions.

Amy Ray, Treasurer

Here is Your Prayer Team

The mission of The Prayer Team is to lift up to God in prayer those who are in need physically or mentally and also those in mourning....and, to praise Our Father for the many blessings given to us each day. The Team meets corporately Monday evenings from 5-6:00pm. Each member prays over the individual names daily. Special communications are done with each listing on the prayer list, whether it be a call, a card, or a visit. Unique gifts and deliveries are made personally by the group members periodically throughout the year so people will know they are cared for and loved.

The formal Prayer List is updated weekly by the Team and has been published for the Sunday Worship Service since 2010. There is also a confidential prayer list which is known only by the Team whose current members are Chairman Georgia Fauber, Susan Epling, and Vicki Mays. Martha Showalter and Frank Legon are Team members who are with us in spirit. Should there be anyone who wishes to be an active member of this special group, please call Georgia Fauber.

The Prayer Team was begun when Steve McNeely, Loraine Legon, and Georgia Fauber were discussing after church services the need for more prayer in the church. Often, Frank stated that when he would be dialing into the Monday night conference call, his mind would flash back to seeing Loraine and Georgia sitting in the church pew developing this program, which warmed his heart. Loraine passed away while members were being found and before The Prayer Team formally started.

Initially, the list with names only was placed in the church bulletin on a 5 x 7 sheet. After some months, it was thought by members of the congregation that they wanted to be told why the person's name was noted. It is important to keep the list to one sheet, so sometimes what the person wants to be said is longer than what is actually communicated. Permission is retrieved from those on the list, and the person contributing the name of a "friend or family member" is responsible for the approval from that person.

In February, The Prayer Team and members of the Diaconate met via Zoom in order to secure healthy communication between the two important entities of caring at Peakland Baptist. If either is informed of an illness or a concern, it is to be communicated to the other via the chairmen.

As is noted at the top of the Prayer List, "Each prayer is a message of faith in God". The Prayer Team is thankful to have the opportunity to serve in this important mission.



Spiritual Formation Offerings

Our **Wednesday morning Bible Study**, which meets at **10:30 a.m. each week via Zoom**, The Zoom link is:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84559562588?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84559562588?pwd=NctPVEloSm9UejVzZk1OMC91OXE2dz09)

[pwd=NctPVEloSm9UejVzZk1OMC91OXE2dz09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84559562588?pwd=NctPVEloSm9UejVzZk1OMC91OXE2dz09)

Meeting ID: 845 5956 2588

Passcode: 778066

+1 646 558 8656 US

That link will remain the same through the month of May of 2021. We are currently in the book of I John, and will continue through II John and III John. After that, we decided together our next book!

Sunday School Updates!

The **Formations Class** is an adult bible group, meeting in the church parlor with COVID Sunday, March 7th, at 9:45. We will use a shared teaching schedule to study "The Word and the Cross," from the gospel of Mark, and Luke's Easter Stories from Luke and Acts. We have room in the Parlor as we begin again to honor in-person study of God's word. Join with us, and then worship with us in the sanctuary at 11:00 a.m.

In March the **Searchers Class** will conclude the study of the section on The Sacramental Life in Richard Foster's "Devotional Classics." We will begin discussions of Marcus Borg's "Days of Awe and Wonder: How to be a Christian in the 21st Century." The questions are asked, "Why be a Christian in the twenty-first century? Because it gives us a vision. And a hope. And a way." Join us by Zoom each Sunday morning at 9:45 (earlier time so any who wish to attend in-person worship can get there on time!) Questions about connecting with Zoom can be sent to Parks Snead or Deborah Raessler.

Fellowship Opportunities

Our **Small Group Zoom** is on **Sunday evenings at 5pm**. It is just for fun and we usually discuss books, TV, movies, things are families are up to, food and how our week has gone. All are welcome! Our small Group will be meeting through March—here is the link:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82146462193?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82146462193?pwd=NmNVQTBPZ3NHWWNDMFJnYmZla0gydz09)

[pwd=NmNVQTBPZ3NHWWNDMFJnYmZla0gydz09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82146462193?pwd=NmNVQTBPZ3NHWWNDMFJnYmZla0gydz09)

Meeting ID: 821 4646 2193

Passcode: 340730

1 646 558 8656 US

March Birthdays

3	Niki White
5	Andrew Lewis
8	Juanita Phillips
8	Mary Rockwell
8	Will Thomasson
13	Anna Kearse
13	Anna Sloan
15	Ebo Fauber
17	Kelly Mack
18	Barbara Lee
19	Purnell Pettyjohn
20	Susan Epling
20	Farshid Shahrokhi
21	Hayden Dietz
23	Cheryl Curcio
24	Nancy Rice
24	Sam Whitesell
31	Suzanne McNeely
31	Taylor Riley
	Gregg Moody

