

THE ADVENT ANNOUNCER

August 2020

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PASTOR'S LETTER

As I write, we face difficult times. First the worldwide corona virus pandemic already has claimed about 115,000 U.S. lives. Then George Floyd, who was black, was killed by a white police officer, who knelt on his neck for some 8+ minutes, while he was handcuffed, as bystanders and police officers watched. The incident was caught on camera, providing evidence of racial inequality and privilege, leading to worldwide protests and civil unrest. Just a few days ago, torrential thunderstorms brought down lots of trees and limbs and disturbed power. (Thanks to Kyle Scribner's nephew and his chain saw, the clean-up at church/the parish house took hours rather than days)

Many feel overwhelmed even before the expected barrage of political attack ads hits.

Yet, hear these words from St Paul: "We know that all things work together for

good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28 NRSV Bible Translation.) These words bring more than hope when we see "God moments" continuing in these difficult times. "God moments" often involve people working together to fight the virus and bring needed change to our country following the



killing of George Floyd. Unfortunately, you often only hear these stories publicized on social media, depending where you look.

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Many God moments have also continued to surround Advent's mission. Even as in-person worship was suspended, we never closed. Our mission to worship, invite, nurture and serve continued in new ways. We seem to be fulfilling the prophet Isaiah's words: "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland." (Isaiah 43:18-19 NRSV Bible translation.)

Advent used the gift of technology to move Bible study, Confirmation Class, council and other meetings to Zoom. We started a new biweekly prayer meeting on Zoom with WCCEC. Worshipping using Zoom actually created new connections and relationships, as names were attached to faces. Long time members, new members, prior members, distant members, charter members and new faces joined together to experience a very different way of gathering around Word and Sacrament. One shut-in even suggested that the corona virus was the best thing that had happened to them because they now have access to pre-recorded services on YouTube, wonderfully recorded and edited by Tim Porreca. Another shut-in, who now joins us for live worship on Zoom, shared similar sentiments, even after testing positive for the corona virus, fortunately being asymptomatic.

Soon after, Dave Hoch passionately and joyfully began sharing his skills to bring our many musicians and vocalists together online to produce some wonderful worship songs, working closely with Eric and Jamie Wonder. You can see them on Advent's "YouTube" Channel and some were shared on Facebook to widespread acclaim. Future songs might even involve former exchange students. Through the gift of technology, more musicians are coming together and sharing their gifts to make a joyful noise for God. This may also augment in-person worship when the corona virus no longer threatens us. Jim Teague has spent many hours working with WCCEC to research and implement the acquisition of new video technology in support of more easily continuing higher quality online worship experiences

The conversations regarding worshipping online that started last fall proved to be far more prescient than any of us imagined. We had a head start answering the "what" questions, which then enabled us to more quickly address and experience many of the "who," "what," "when," "where," and "why" questions. Thanks to dedicated staff and lay leadership, what might have taken months or years to implement, occurred in a matter of days. Advent's planned October synod-wide continuing education event surrounding online worship is no longer needed. Thank you, Jenn Miller, for all your assistance with technology, your flexibility and positive personality. They were a godsend in helping to lead Advent through this process.

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Maintaining an "online presence" surrounding worship is something we can and will do moving forward. It will enable new connections and support our mission. The "how" questions are still being answered and continue to evolve. Might you be part of the answer to the "who" questions surrounding this continuing change at Advent? Might you give your expertise, time or willingness to learn in this area to support our mission? If so, please reach out to me. Advent needs you.

God's peace,
Pastor Chris

P.S. Taking in the mail, every day, seeing so many offering envelopes showing faithful financial support of Advent's mission, also provides a God moment. Thank you! And thank you to those who faithfully support Advent's mission through online giving. Jenn tells me it too has grown substantially in number and amounts contributed.

CARE & CONNECTIONS TEAM FOCUSES ON ADVENT'S MISSION "WINS"

- **Worship** : In-person returns! CCT will assist with various events down the road in order to engage our congregation in fellowship. Look for updates on future email blasts.
- **Invite** : Welcome family and friends to worship. Online services will continue even when in-person worship more fully reopens under "green" phase guidelines. Spread the good news!
- **Nurture** : CCT members joined Advent members and friends to reach out to provide back-packs to kindergartners from the Care Foundation who will be attending WCASD in the fall. Twelve fully stocked back-packs were donated by: Sharon Knoedler (CCT), Kristi Crum (CCT), Maureen Muehsam, Tori Seaman and her friend Mohammed Giyasov, Aurora Synder (friend of Tanner Crum), Holly Steel and the Williams family (who have been worshiping with us online) and Janey Wolf. Additionally, Sarah Staub donated books for the back-packs. We also continue to find ways to reach out to our shut-ins, who are trying to understand all the new normals.
- **Serve**: CCT and other members donated blood at the June 27th Red Cross blood drive. The CCT expresses HOPE for an amazing future at Advent, knowing our faith and trust in God will light the way for us to continue our mission. Any member who wishes to join the CCT team, please contact Nancy Jamieson at nanbarjam@aol.com.

GLORIOUS AND PRODUCTIVE GARDENS

Advent and the parish house have extensive bulb gardens, which appear in the early spring and perennial gardens, which provide a colorful array of blooms throughout the summer. Because the plants are arranged in the "English Garden style," we no longer need to mulch and weeding has been greatly reduced. We also have a community garden, which provides fresh produce to the West Chester Food Cupboard. Many thanks to those who tend our gardens, especially Alex and



Annabelle Carden, Jolene Garney and Sue Kreno. Your contributions to the Garden Fund support purchase of fertilizer, lawn care applications, tree maintenance (there are some trees on the parish house property requiring attention beyond what we can do ourselves) and gardening equipment. If you would like an area to maintain, training is provided. We also have extra perennials we can share!

FINANCIAL UPDATE

Through May, thanks to the generosity of member offering, we experienced a small surplus. Offering income was up about 2.5% over last year. Expenses were lower than last year, in part because we only paid our mortgage interest beginning in the month of May. Building usage donations declined sharply. We were able to lock in lower electricity supply rates for the parish house and the church, for the next two years and 18 months respectively. Savings are over 6% and over 13% respectively. We are watching gas rates, but our current rate is lower than PECO's price to compare, locked in through November 2022, and better rates are not available. Finally, many thanks to Ian James for faithfully serving as our treasurer for nearly 7 years. Thank you Bill Boyer for serving as our assistant treasurer, beginning in January of this year. Bill has been very helpful in the transition to having Leslie Marlo begin as our new treasurer as of mid June. Thank you Leslie for volunteering your time and talent in this position. Thank you to Mike Neely for your continued work auditing books.

Finally, thank you to Jenn Miller for your continued help during and after the transition.