

March—April 2020

CHURCH STAFF

Pastor

Rev. Kenneth E. Kovacs, Ph.D.

Associate Pastor

Rev. Dorothy L. Boulton, M.Div.

Director of Music

Greg Knauf, D.M.A.

Organist

Douglas Heist, D.M.A.

Communications Consultant and Messenger Editor

Lisa Roca

Membership Secretary

Peggy Carr

Administrative Assistant

Shirley Winters

Bookkeeper

Virginia Daiger

Sexton

Bernard Lawson

Sunday Sextons

Cecilie Nilsen

Paige Percy

Sunday Child Care Providers

Roberta Harris

Child Care Center Director

Michelle Hepner

Child Care Center Assistant Director

Heather Hollandsworth

Child Care Center Office Manager

Ashley Graham



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Living in Hope

By Dorothy Boulton

One of my clergy-focused facebook groups posted a question for the day: *What theological narratives are creating meaning for you?*

As I reflect on my recent trip to Israel, and in particular a picture of the skyline of the city of Jerusalem, I am heartened by the story of the prophet Jeremiah. Though he was known as “the weeping prophet,” Jeremiah nevertheless gave a word of hope to the people of Judah in the late 7th century / early 6th century b.c.e.

It was a time of destruction: the army of Babylon had invaded. After a long siege the city of Jerusalem, including the Temple—YHWH’s own house—was destroyed. People were taken captive and exiled to a foreign land. Everything was upended. Everything changed. Lives were totally disrupted. The world as they knew it was gone. There was upheaval, confusion, grief, sorrow, and loss.

What the prophet did next was very strange: Jeremiah purchased a field, a family field, in his hometown of Anathoth. (Who in the world would buy the deed to property when everything is falling apart?)

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Living in Hope

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This was a wild and wonderful act of hope! Such a tangible act of belief that people would return, an incredible sign of assurance that the community would be restored. Jeremiah knew that God does not abandon us. God redeems us, brings us back, and gives us new life.

That sign of hope from our biblical ancestor sustains me now.

What do God's people do in the midst of a crisis? We do the things that show forth hope. Because God has made a promise:

This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Houses, fields and vineyards will be brought again out of this land. I will bring them back to this place and let them live in safety.

—Jeremiah 32:15,37 ✚

Some of the saddest things I see as I go out for a daily walk are closed playgrounds. The slides and swings are roped off with caution tape. Fences

have been put up to enclose the entire area. I know this is done for health reasons during this time of contagion: children are being kept from touching surfaces that may have coronavirus on them, and also from being in close contact with one another. Such an act is considered a public good.

But, when I was bicycling around the neighborhood today, I saw another sight: in the heart of downtown Columbia, MD, they are building a playground.

I know... I *trust* that the time will come when the sound of laughter and joy will resound through that playground. Children will run and climb and slide and play tag. Families will gather together again. We will once again live in a time of safety. This is what sustains me: signs of the promise. So I'm living in hope. And I pray that you do too. As we look ahead to Holy Week, and to the power of the Resurrection, find a sign. Be a sign of that wild and divine and outrageously unstoppable Hope.



Dorothy Boulton, overlooking the city of Jerusalem.



Playground being built in downtown Columbia, MD.

Our Financial Resources

We rely on everyone—especially now—to support what God is doing through this congregation. The vitality of this ministry is secured by God's grace and funded by the faithfulness and commitment of God's people. We are counting on the ongoing generosity of our members and friends.

Thank you! —Keith Glennan, Finance Committee

Actual income as of March 14, 2020:
\$ 144,349

Actual expense as of March 14, 2020:
\$-139,041

Total: \$ 5,308

Hope, Caring, and Healing in a Public Health Crisis

By Howie Nixon

During a discussion of the COVID-19 pandemic on a recent PBS News Hour, an expert stated that “hope is not a policy.” This is true, and we certainly do not want to appear to be Pollyannaish and underestimate the seriousness of this crisis. Yet hope is important as a virtue and as a basis for our motivation and action, but it also must be made real. Good people acting together for the common good and to help those in need translate hope into reality. It is not Pollyannaish to dismiss cynicism and despair in favor of confidence and hope. Our Christian beliefs provide a way of seeing the importance of hope and making it real.

1 Corinthians 13 attests to the importance of hope. When grounded in Christian faith and love—or charity in the Kings James version, it is a reason for caring and constructive action. It motivates us and enables us to meet challenges. It is God’s gift to us through his grace. Where are we to find such hope - and faith, love, and charity, in the midst of this growing pandemic? I see it in media reports of selfless actions by health care providers and an assortment of volunteers, in the tireless efforts to create and administer tests for the virus and to develop a vaccine, and in the personal sacrifices of people volunteering to self-quarantine to try to contain the spread of the virus. I am also impressed by the informative daily reports by medical experts and many government leaders at all levels whose honesty and insight enable us to discern the changing nature of the crisis but also help us to see beyond it.

Moreover, I find evidence of hope in my daily life at Charlestown, where my wife Sara and I live. It can be found in the actions of the dedicated administrators and employees who come in every day to care for us, protect us, serve us, and meet our needs. Their job is especially challenging and risky in the places where our most vulnerable residents live, in assisted living, long-term care, and the medical facility. These professionals contribute to the culture of caring that permeates our community. This culture is manifested in the volunteerism of our residents. It is a way of life for many, both on and off campus. Although we are people from a variety of religious and faith backgrounds, there are many here who demonstrate

what I would call a Christian commitment to caring. Charlestown residents welcome newcomers, regularly look in on elderly and sick neighbors, and engage in a variety of activities to care for those who are failing or need comfort and support. Over 300 resident volunteers are involved in our Treasure Sale. A main purpose of it is to raise money for our Benevolent Care Fund. This fund provides money for those who outlive their financial resources so that they will truly have a home for life here. The careful and thoughtful policies and actions of our administrators and residents during this pandemic are much appreciated but also are what we have come to expect on our campus with its culture of caring.

David Brooks wrote in his book *The Second Mountain* about the values that are embedded in caring communities, and he emphasized the importance of finding Christian faith in his journey in quest of his “second mountain.” It was a journey that took him from a self-absorbed individualistic pursuit of success and its trappings to a life shaped more by a sense of community and caring. He proposed that while happiness derived from personal accomplishments may fade, the joy from turning outward endures. He wrote, “To live with joy is to live with wonder, gratitude and hope. People who are on the second mountain have been transformed. They are deeply committed. The outpouring of love has become a steady force.” In addition, he wrote that helping others can “renew the lost sense of community that afflicts an America whose churches, neighborhoods, mores and cultural institutions are all in decline.”

While many across the world and our nation will suffer during the COVID-19 crisis, this crisis also offers us an opportunity to renew the values that sustained our communities and their institutions in the past. By coming together, we can heal our communities and society while we heal those sickened by this pandemic. Sara and I feel fortunate that we belong to a community of faith at CPC and live in a residential community at Charlestown that both nurture cultures of caring that help members and residents help others to have hope and heal in difficult times.

Session Meeting Highlights

The Session is a body of fifteen members, elected by the congregation and ordained as ruling elders, who provide leadership for our congregation. Following are highlights of the meeting on March 4, 2020.

- The Finance Committee reported that the strong start to the new year continues, with a budget surplus at the end of February.
- Session approved the request by Hillcrest Elementary School next door to place a collection bin in our parking lot for their clothing collection drive. Our members are welcome to place clean, used clothing in the bin. Proceeds benefit the school.
- CPC will be hosting commissioners to the 224th General Assembly of the PC(USA), meeting in Baltimore, to a luncheon after worship on Sunday, June 21, 2020.
- The ad hoc Nominating Committee reported their progress toward developing a slate of officers to present for election by the congregation. Session voted to call a congregational meeting on Sunday, March 29 for that purpose. Session also voted to constitute the future Nominating Committee with one representative each from Session, Deacons, Trustees, Child Care Council, and Envision Board, plus one at-large member from the congregation.
- Session received the report of the Envision Board Task Force, which presented suggestions for revising the Envision Fund Guidelines to better reflect how the Fund has evolved since its inception six years ago. Session will be studying the recommendations at a retreat before deciding what changes will be made to the organization and operation of the Envision Fund.
- Session voted to create a Pandemic Task Force to obtain and disseminate accurate and verified information on the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic to the congregation. The task force will be made up of professionals familiar with medical and public health issues.

Session recognizes the need to continually communicate with our membership, and we welcome your suggestions for communication exchange. Take a few minutes to send a message to a Session member, the pastors, or the church office, and let us know what you think. We want to hear from you!—David Hutton, Clerk of Session

THE Messenger

Our Mission

We seek to find and share God's calling for this community of faith through worship, fellowship and service.

Catonsville Presbyterian Church

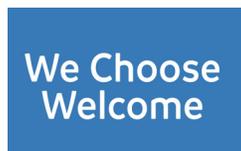
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Church Office Hours:
Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m.– 4:30 p.m.
office@catonsvillepres.org



Staying Connected Suspended In-Person Worship

During this time of social distancing we are developing new ways for us to be together. Visit Catonsville Presbyterian's website and Facebook page for our online Sunday worship services and latest announcements.

Our committees, boards, and Thursday Morning Bible Study will meet via Zoom, a popular conferencing platform. We are developing opportunities for our youth groups and church school families to stay connected and supported. Session will soon make a decision about in-person worship in April. And plans are underway for Palm Sunday, Holy Week, and Easter services.

Regular eNews updates are emailed out each week. [Sign up for our weekly e-newsletter today.](#) Through acts of kindness, patience, and compassion we can be the church God has called us to be, for one another and for our larger community in need.

—Ken Kovacs