

THE MESSENGER

Session News for the Pews

OVERVIEW

Details About Return to Worship - 2

An Update About the IPT - 2

Mission and Vision - 3

Session Notes - 4

For Word-Share-Prayer: Isaiah 43:16-19



16 Thus says the Lord,
who makes a way in the sea,
a path in the mighty waters,
17 who brings forth chariot and horse,
army and warrior;
they lie down, they cannot rise,
they are extinguished, quenched like a wick:
18 "Remember not the former things,
nor consider the things of old.
19 Behold, I am doing a new thing;
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness
and rivers in the desert.

WORD: Read a given scripture passage silently and underline the words or phrases that grab you.

SHARE: Jot down your insights from the text. How does this passage apply to your life?

PRAYER: Write down your prayer requests and pray individually or with family and friends or groups

Church Services will be livestreamed beginning June 6th!

First Presbyterian will worship as one community again as we transition to livestreaming and take steps for a limited number of people witnessing the service in person. Connect to live services on Facebook or our website. Please be patient should any technical issues arise. You may report problems to the office via email. Anyone who doesn't have email may phone the office and leave a message.



Online Congregational Meeting After Worship June 20, 11:30am

The congregation will vote on a slate of Elders and Deacons and adjust the bylaws (to increase the number of Elders and to allow electronic voting). Watch for an email to arrive with the meeting link.

Details About Returning to In-person Worship

With joy, we announce the beginning steps to reopen for worship! At first, witnessing in person will be different than what it was pre-pandemic, but **beginning June 6th we will worship as one community**, with some viewing a livestream remotely and some witnessing the service in person.

The June 6th worship will serve as a practice run for Session and the Pandemic Health Team to work out logistics. That experience will inform us when members can sign up to attend services. Please keep an eye out for an email or letter via USPS announcing this date.

Please note that masks will be mandatory for attending worship in person - if you are unable or unwilling to wear a mask, please worship via the livestream at home until this requirement is eliminated.

Please Reserve a Space for In-person Worship

RESERVATIONS REQUIRED –it is important to know in advance who and how many people are attending worship. This registration will also serve as a contact tracing tool if the need arises.

HOW DO RESERVATIONS WORK? Sign up for worship through salinepres.org on your phone or computer. If you cannot sign up electronically, please call the office to sign up. RSVP by Thursday to attend worship in person on Sunday. *If you cannot attend after reserving a space, please cancel so others may go.*

WHEN TO ATTEND WORSHIP AT HOME - Cancel your reservation if you are feeling ill, have COVID symptoms, have had close contact with someone diagnosed with COVID in the last 14 days, or have returned from international travel within 10 days.

What about the church building reopening?

For now, general member access to the building is still limited. Staff time in the building will begin to resume, and as the state health guidelines allow, the building will re-open more generally. **You must still call ahead to the office in advance of entering the building.**

An Update About the IPT

As announced on May 19th, the IPT has requested their term end on June 30th, with Rev. Gere continuing to Moderate Session through the Summer. Session is grateful for the IPT, who have guided us in amazing ways during this unprecedented time. In June, a representative from the Presbytery's Committee on Ministry will attend the Session meeting and more information will come then.

This extraordinary ministry team's time with us has been a blessing and we wish them the best as they look forward to enjoying retirement once again.

What to Expect During In-person Worship

BEFORE THE SERVICE (Arrive no earlier than 10:15 for 10:30 worship)

- **Enter through parking lot (ramp) door only.**
- You will be greeted and given a health screening.
- After screening, an usher will seat you.
- Offerings can be placed in the designated basket as you enter the sanctuary or can be accepted online. No passing of the plate during worship.

DURING THE SERVICE

- In lieu of a paper bulletin, information will be shown on the screens. For those worshipping at home, a bulletin link will be available on the church website.

AFTER THE SERVICE

- Stay seated until an usher releases you and your family. Ushers will release each row (similar to after a wedding ceremony).
- Please exit the building promptly when given leave. Coffee hour has not resumed, but **socializing in the meditation garden is warmly encouraged.**

Session will work closely with the PHT to refine these reopening plans as needed. Please look for timely updates in your email and the Weekly CONNECT! Members may use the "Ask Session" button on our website if they have questions. Call the office if you do not have internet and staff will help you submit a question.

From Mission and Vision Task Force

Do you remember a time when everyone you knew went to church? When the only thing going on Sunday morning was church? When Sunday School classes were full and we had to squeeze tight to fit everyone in the sanctuary at worship? While we might wish for those days to return, the reality is that the church exists in a different place in postmodern America.

So how do we move forward in a time when only 47% of us belong to a church, mosque or synagogue? Two words have been surfacing in our discussions: faithfulness and intentionality. Both involve digging deep into commitment to worship, love and serve, not simply on Sunday morning but in every part of our life.

- LIFELONG discipleship formation vs. complacent "Christian" piety, simply teaching good morals, or offering the latest programs
- Intentional authentic evangelism vs. a committee that does evangelism
- Outward incarnational focus vs. inward institutional survival; communities of exclusion
- Empowered servant leadership vs. the Pastor's job, monopolized leadership, hiring the young energetic pastor, burning out good volunteers
- Spirit-inspired worship vs. Self-gratifying worship, stale ritual divorced of meaning, or consumer entertainment worship
- Caring relationships vs. any other social club, façades, hypocrisy
- Church health vs. Unhealthy dysfunction; toxic environments

Where does Saline Presbyterian Church land on these issues? Where would we want to be if we were a faithful, intentional community seeking to be a relevant presence in the world?

~The Mission and Vision Task Force

Session Meeting Notes, May 2021

Session met virtually via MS Team Tuesday evening, May 18, 2021. We now begin each meeting with WORD-SHARE-PRAYER devotions. This month the devotions were led by Rev. Zambon. Each month a different Elder will lead the WORD-SHARE-PRAYER.

The pattern of this form of a devotional is the leader of the devotional time, clergy, or laity, first reads a passage of Scripture (WORD) to the group. Members of the group then silently spend 5-7 minutes reading the passage to themselves, circling/underlining/jotting down the specific words or phrases that speak most meaningfully to them. Next, group members spend time sharing insights and feelings with each other (SHARE) from the perspective of how the passage spoke to them. Finally, the devotional time ends with the group offering short (often one sentence) prayers (PRAYER). All church groups are encouraged to begin meetings using this pattern of a devotional.

The co-chair of the Mission and Vision Team, Nancy Ryan, reported that the team is discussing the history of the church, how we can relate to the Saline community, how the Pandemic has changed us, as individuals and as a congregation, where are we now and where we want to be...in terms of spiritual health, evangelism and how we live our lives.

Order of the Day...Process for re-opening the church! Ready for Phase 2 of the opening... lots to do but our hope is to have a dry-run with Session members, families, and the Pandemic Health Team on June 6th. For the re-opening on June 13th[tentative date], registration will be required online or by telephone to the church office. More details to follow in The Messenger.

Motion from the Administration and Personnel Committee to concur with the Interim Pastor Team's desire to complete their employment contract on June 30, 2021. Many thanks and much appreciation to the IPT for their leadership and guidance. Rev. Gere will remain as the moderator through the summer.

Treasurer's report: YTD Income \$77K; YTD Expense \$(62K); Net \$15K

Nominating Committee led by John Coffey will be completing the slate for new officers soon. Motion was approved to have nominated Elder training on June 13th and an online Congregational Meeting June 20th to elect Elders and Deacons.

Alleluia for God's Love,

Janyce Durnell Clerk of Session