

# The LINK



UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF PATCHOGUE

Since 1791

April 2020

## Fear Is The Opposite of Faith

The recent national and international pandemic has caused much anxiety and fear to grip the hearts of people.

In the last hour I was notified that the pastor of the Gaylordsville United Methodist Church in Connecticut was rushed to the hospital with a high fever and difficulty breathing. He contracted the coronavirus.

So, it is not like this awful challenge is facing some remote part of the world—it has, indeed, arrived on our doorstep. And that creates fear in the hearts of many.

What usually causes fear?

Well, in this case it is caused by the unknown ahead of us and the uncertainty of the future.

This can be very intimidating, to say the

least. And yet, the Bible tells us in 1 John 4:18: *“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out all fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.”*

The Bible also promises that God will *“keep you in perfect peace”* when you keep your mind focused on Him and *“Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord God is an everlasting rock”* (Isaiah 26:3-4).

I remember when I was a somewhat unwise teenager trying to impress the girls that our group travelled to the beach with. I wanted to demonstrate what a great swimmer I was. So, I dove into the ocean and swam out as far as one’s eye could see.

The lifeguard started blowing his whistle ferociously for me to head back to shore. I must say by the time I had reached

that point, I was thoroughly exhausted and wondered how I was going to make it back to shore.

I didn’t quite panic, but to say I wasn’t concerned and somewhat fearful would be a grossly mischaracterization of what I was experiencing in my mind at the time.

I did every swimming maneuver I ever learned in the Boy Scouts—the dog paddle, the back stroke, the side stroke, constantly bobbing my head up and down to see

**Continued on Page 2**

## COVID-19

**Until further notice, all worship services and activities in our building by all groups are canceled.**

**The office is closed but Camille is working from home and calls to the office are directed to her phone.**

**Please continue your financial support. Mailing a check is the best option. You can arrange through your bank’s website to have one mailed automatically. You can also call the office to arrange for electronic giving.**



## Circle of Concern

### For COVID-19:

Kathy Halliwell's daughter Karen and her husband Andrew have both tested positive.

The sister of Peter Halliwell and Brenda Klingel, Susie Conti, and Susie's husband Mario and son Joseph have all tested positive. Mario has been hospitalized.

Katie Weber's Uncle Jim is hospitalized with the virus and is being treated for double pneumonia.

Lyn Russo reports that Don Anderson has tested positive and is being treated at home.

Kathy Halliwell's neighbors, Dina and Jon Nowak have tested positive.

Pastor Chuck reports the death of retired NY pastor James Veatch.

The Rev. John Esposito, a former Connecticut colleague of Pastor Chuck is hospitalized and his family is quarantined.

Jennifer Higbie reports two people she knows have died.

### Also Healing:

Bruce Kirshner is ill at Stony Brook Hospital but has tested negative.

Two members of the extended Higbie family are currently hospitalized for non-virus issues.

John Horyczum has had an emergency double bypass.

### Continued Prayers:

Kimberly Helfst, Lola Schwartz, JoAnn Synder, Bill, Gina, Diane, Thomas Schaff, Bill Hurley, Elijah, Michael (Barbara's brother), Jennifer Higbie, Lawrence & Family, Tyler Ferrari, Sabrina, Ed Klingel, Laura Clifford, Lucille Taylor, Baby Abigail Violet Kileen, James Loris, Charlie Moreno, Annabelle Dasano,

Ferrara Family, Marion Lyons, Jerry Alt, Lynn Russo, Robert Schneider, Jr., Eileen Thompson, Maryellen Strieb Camacho, Richard Pomponio, Ronald Lyons, Alice Titus

### These in Rehab or Nursing Care:

**Geri Sheridan, Robert Krawzak** in Brookhaven Health Care Facility, 801 Gazzola Dr., East Patchogue, NY

**Alice Zahnd** in Gurwin Jewish Nursing Facility, 68 Hauppauge Rd., Commack, NY

**Norene (Rogers) Caputo** in Legacy House, 6310 N. Durango Dr., Las Vegas, NV, 89149, Apt. 210

—Compiled by Kathy Halliwell

*Please email Kathy—*

*keats1002@gmail.com with any additions or deletions.*

## Fear (From Page 1)

how much progress I was making.

After what seemed like an eternity, and completely exhausted, my feet finally touched the ocean surface—yes, good old terra-firma. I believe what the prophet Isaiah was saying is that when we trust in the Lord, God becomes that everlasting rock when everything else around us seems like sinking sand.

And, in that trust we begin to feel a sense of security like I felt when I was able to finally stand up on my own two feet and exit the ocean. Of course, I told the girls that it was no big deal and I had everything under control—which I didn't.

It has been proven that people who struggle with stress, worry and anxiety can usually trace it back to the ultimate root of it all—FEAR!

Now, having said this, fear is a God-given emotion that prepares the body and mind to deal with the challenges of life.

It provokes a response like fight or flight. It is a feeling of anxiety and agitation caused by the presence of real or imagined danger. But we must not allow it to grip us in such a way that it makes us a prisoner in our mind.

We must not allow it to consume our thoughts each day as we receive one report after the other about the spreading of this pandemic.

Fear is the opposite of Faith.

As the prophet said and in so many other places in the Bible—we must put our trust in the Lord and He will become that everlasting rock we can stand on and regain our footing.

This month we will be celebrating the glorious Resurrection Day, Easter, most likely in our homes. Nevertheless, that day commemorates the victorious overcoming of sin and death.

Remember what John said in 1 John 4:16, *"There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out all fear."*

Well, there was no greater love ever displayed than the love Jesus demonstrated when he gave his life for us on Calvary's cross. Satan and his accusers thought they were done with him when he was laid in a borrowed tomb.

However, little did they know—but we do—that he rose from that grave, and in that resurrection, we can proclaim Victory, Hallelujah and Amen!

Friends, we will get through this challenge facing our communities and the world—for we are more than conquerors in Christ Jesus.

In His Grip,

—Pastor Chuck

“When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. . . . There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains.” **Mark 13:7-8**

Humanity has long worried for its own survival amid war, natural disaster, and disease. The escalating scare over the novel coronavirus COVID-19 feels to some like the end of the world. Jesus said, “such things must happen,” signaling an inevitability of disease and disaster in our world. As followers of Christ, we recognize this earth is not yet the new creation.

As churches, we are called to be harbingers of heaven in all of the ways we hold hope, keep faith, trust God, love our neighbors and enemies, and especially love the poor and the sick. We refuse to cave to fear, remembering always how “perfect love casts out fear” (1 John 4:18) and death has no sting (1 Cor. 15:55).

In these anxious days, the church can shine as a light of hope, care, faith, patience, and prudence, demonstrating for the world how our faith provides true assurance against worry and fear.

**Trust God:** Viral disease is a fact of biological existence and part of creation. Keeping perspective and not panicking apply here, just as they do for all risks we face as creatures in a finite world. No matter how dire circumstances get, the Lord remains our refuge and strength, “an ever-present help in trouble” (Ps. 46:1). To trust in the Lord amid trouble is to experience and bear witness to the power of Christ.

**Pray:** We must pray for the sick and the scared, for public health officials, for doctors and nurses, for researchers, and for caregivers. As Christians, we believe prayer has power, so we seek help from the Lord.

**Heal the Sick:** A core calling for Christians is to care for the sick and dying (Matt. 10:8), at times at the risk of our own lives (John 15:13). This is the epitome of love. Even if a virus outbreak prevents us from gathering as congregations to worship, we still support one another in our caregiving. This can happen through prayer, through verbal encouragement, and through coming alongside others to provide help in a crisis.

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body. . . . Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?” **Matthew 6:25-27**

## Bishop's Mar. 30 COVID-19 Update

I greet you today with the full knowledge that each of you are facing tremendous challenges in the work that you are doing to serve your people and remain faithful to



the call that God has so firmly placed on your lives. The countless stories that I

have heard from so many of you attest to that reality. They have blessed my soul as I know they have blessed the ones that you are serving.

Still, these days are difficult and the constant rise of the COVID-19 virus in our midst is what gives rise to this latest update. I encourage you to find a comfortable place to sit and read this update with the upmost care and attention.

### **Palm Sunday, Holy Week, and Easter**

On Friday, the Governor of New York, Andrew Cuomo, extended the closure of New York schools until April 15th and continues in his firm directives that people should stay at home. The Governor of Connecticut, Ned Lamont, has issued a ban on gatherings of more than five persons in any one setting. Even though he has made an exception for religious gatherings, it is my intention to follow the more stringent guidelines rather than the more lenient ones.

Therefore, based on the continuing growth of the COVID-19 virus and the strict urging of people to stay at home and not gather in groups, I am

closing all United Methodist Churches in the New York Annual Conference through April 12th. We will re-evaluate the situation on Monday, April 13th, and inform you what our next steps will be.

There are NO exceptions to this directive. As hard as it is for me to say this, and as hard as it is for you to read it, we must do all we can to enforce this directive. If there are any reports of non-compliance with this decision, I will hold my pastor's directly responsible for this and will be forced to act accordingly. This is for the health and safety of our congregations, especially those over age 65 who are the most vulnerable to the disease.

Several have made inquiries about Palm Sunday, suggesting that drive-thru services could be conducted where palm branches could be distributed. This is not acceptable. Many palm branches are shipped in from other countries and as they are handled by multiple persons, the distribution of palm branches presents a potential health hazard.

Others have made inquiries about opening the doors of the church for Prayer Vigils, limiting the amount of people coming through the doors. This too is not an acceptable practice. Persons entering the church who touch pews, altar rails, etc., present a potential hazard for the transmission of the virus.

The doors of our churches are to be closed. No services are to be held. The only acceptable provision is for five or less persons conducting a live stream worship service from the sanctuary or video-taping a service

for posting.

My direct language related to this directive has come because of the non-compliance in a few of our churches based on my last update. Persons became infected as a result of that non-compliance, bringing harm to parishioners and others. Some have suggested that it is a stance of faith to defy and assemble people for public worship. I believe it is a statement of faith to love your people so much that you will do anything to protect them from contracting this killer virus. We do what we do because we love, because we care, because we have faith that God will give us the courage to see this crisis through to completion.

Finally, we are working on providing an online, live Easter celebration originating from the Annual Conference Center. More information will be released later this week but we invite you to promote and join us for this celebration.

### **Meetings of Other Groups within the Church Building**

It has also come to my attention that some of our churches are still being used for groups like Alcoholics Anonymous and other support groups. I would ask that you have direct conversation with the leaders of those groups to encourage them to go virtual in their meetings.

Many of our churches engage in "essential" services such as child-care facilities for essential workers (hospital staff, fire, and police personnel), feeding ministries, and homeless shelters. These are encouraged and celebrated but extreme caution including high sanitation and social distancing

should be employed.

In places where lease/rental agreements have been engaged there may be legal matters that will impact a decision you might make to close the building entirely. In those cases, please review those lease agreements carefully and engage in honest conversations with those renters about the wisdom of closing your building.

### **Weddings, Funerals, and Baptisms**

This is an area where great emotions tempt us to do something that we shouldn't be doing. There should be no weddings or funerals conducted at this time unless there are less than five people present who are engaged in appropriate social distancing.

There should be no baptisms until such time as we can gather as a church community once again. Our sacramental theology on baptism is very clear. We do not do private baptisms. Baptism is a celebration that is not just reserved to a family. It is a celebration of and for the entire gathered community. Be open enough in your planning to lead families to understand our theology and schedule baptisms far enough out to allow for the gathered congregation to be present.

### **Holy Communion**

This has been a lively topic of debate within our Council of Bishops, among seminary professors and between pastors. It is safe to say that the conversation is "all over the map." In each of my conversations with the Cooperative Parish Coordinators, this question has been asked.

I too find myself, "all over the

map" in terms of a response. In answering the question, [there are three acceptable options but my preference is this]:

### **Delay until you are re-assembled as a congregation**

During this season of Lent and Holy Week, we intentionally lead our people with intentional acts of fasting, sacrifice and penitence. With this kind of reflection, I begin to imagine worship services when we are able to re-assemble. Large crowds, vibrant worship, and Holy Communion! What a celebration that will be! My first preference is to not offer the sacrament until we are back together.

### **Annual Conference**

Due to the ongoing crisis, I have determined that our Annual Conference session, originally scheduled for June 11-14 on the campus of Hofstra University, will be postponed this year.

We have not finalized the date or the format but you can expect that Annual Conference will be reduced to a one-day meeting, sometime this fall, to conduct the essential business before us, including nominations, elections of the Conference Secretary & Chancellor, the approval of the budget, and the ordination of candidates. A separate Clergy Session will be scheduled to care for the Board of Ordained Ministry report to the clergy.

### **Prayers Requested**

As I write this missive, word has come that Bishop Alfred Johnson's wife, Sherrie, has died from the COVID-19 virus. Sherrie was a bright

light for many of us and her loss strikes deep in the heart of Bishop Johnson and all those who loved Sherrie.

In addition, I can report to you this evening that, to our knowledge, three of our pastors have tested positive for the virus with two being hospitalized. Two of our pastor's spouses have been infected as well. The number of laity who have been diagnosed positive is not known at this point.

Regardless, let us be sincere, earnest and intentional about praying for the health and healing of those most directly affected by this killer disease.

I pledge that I will continue to update you as to the developments that affect our work, as well as decisions that will be made that determine the degree to which we can return to our normal operations. Still, what I remind myself of each day is that we will never be quite the same as we were before. Some of our old norms will cease to be relevant and new norms will become standard. Yet, through it all, God will be at work through the Holy Spirit to guide our steps, inspire our words, and bless our lives.

Along with this letter, I send my sincere thoughts and prayers for each of you. Be safe, stay healthy, and know that you are appreciated and loved.

The Journey Continues, . . .

—**Thomas Bickerton,**  
**Resident Bishop**

### **April Birthdays**

**April 2** Samantha Rubino

**April 10** Zoe Josefina Starling

**April 11** Carissa Arena



## A Time To Pause And Reset

The things I dislike the most about the necessary social distancing brought on by the pandemic are:

1. Not being able to shake hands, hug, pat someone on the shoulder, ruffle a little child's hair.
2. Missing church, coffee hour, food pantry, teaching ESL class, book group, movie club, having to hesitate about interacting even with one's own family.
3. Not being able to jump in the car and go to the grocery store for a pint of Cherry Garcia ice cream.

OK, in the larger scheme of things, that last item is not really that important. Technically, I could drive to Shop Rite, but given my children's concern about my possible exposure to the virus, and my daughter's great kindness in shopping for me, so I wouldn't have to go out, I choose to stay home.

Of course, underlying these smaller concerns is the fear and anxiety for the health of beloved family, friends, community and the world. And yet, in the midst of adversity, there is always the opportunity for some good, for something positive.

With our normal patterns fractured, and routines tossed aside, now is the perfect time to reexamine our lives, our mind sets, our world views, the values of our daily lives.

In short, to Pause and Reset. And how appropriate that this occurs in the season of Lent.

While mulling over this insight, I read an essay by Richard Foster, entitled "The Discipline of Simplicity." In

it he speaks of living a life which is first and foremost a life that seeks the kingdom of God, that seeks harmony with God, that seeks God.

But to do this is immensely difficult. "We must live in the modern world and are affected by its fractured and fragmented state. We are trapped in a maze of competing attachments."

We live in a world of constant materialism, where people are defined by wealth, status, power. By the number and caliber of possessions.

We need the latest cell phone, even though last years' model serves the purpose of communication quite adequately. We want not just a car or truck that transports us to where we need to go, but one that parks itself, shows videos to keep the children quiet, practically makes us breakfast. (Or at least can order it)

Thorsten Veblen called this 'conspicuous consumption.' Because we are constantly bombarded by the siren call of materialism, it is very difficult to sort through our lives and see what is true and good and brings us closer to God.

The process is similar to cleaning out our closets after a long time. It seems overwhelming when we open that door; so much stuff! What's good? What's not?

We should bear in mind that material things in and of themselves are neither good nor bad. But when we give them the power to define us, they clog our spiritual arteries.

Foster said, "The discipline of simplicity directly challenges our vested interest in an affluent lifestyle."

So, what can we do to help us navigate the maze of modern materialism?

Foster lists ten steps for the outward expression of simplicity. Remember that they are the outward manifestation of inner spiritual faith and harmony with God.

1. Buy things for their usefulness, rather than their status.

2. Reject anything that produces 'addiction in you. (must have latest video game)

3. Develop a habit of giving things away.

4. Refuse to be propagandized by the custodians of modern gadgets.

5. Enjoy things without owning them.

6. Develop a deeper appreciation for all creation.

7. Look with healthy skepticism at 'Buy now, Pay later' schemes.

8. Obey Jesus' instructions about plain, honest speech. Don't use language to impress or obscure the truth or hurt others.

9. Reject anything that breeds the oppression of others. Racism, sexism, nationalism, for example.

10. Shun anything that distracts you from seeking the Kingdom of God.

I would like to add a cautionary note: Living a simple life does not mean you have to go around in sack cloth and ashes. Nor should it make you feel holier than the next person. It is a way that enables you to live a life of compassion, love, and kindness, without the burden of enslavement to materialism.

—Barbara Becker

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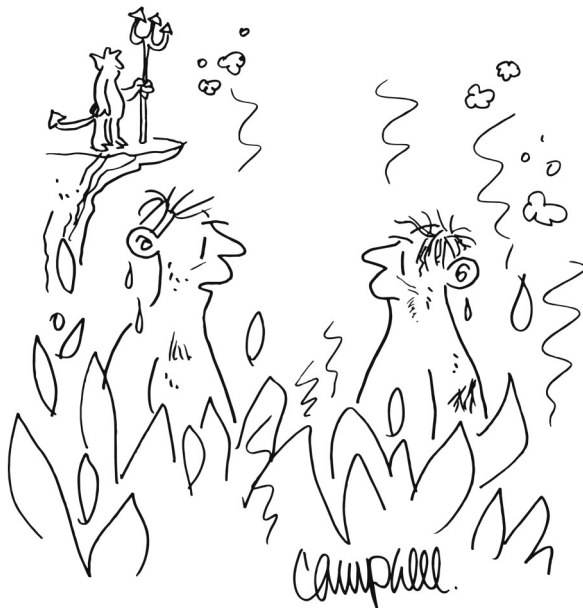
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"Who knew St. Peter had fact checkers?"

# Don't Forget Your Pledge

Please mail your check, arrange for your bank to mail one, or arrange with the office for electronic giving.

The deadline for the May issue of **The Link** is April 24.  
Please email your copy to [gbhoag@optonline.net](mailto:gbhoag@optonline.net).

10 Church St., Patchogue, NY 11772

The Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, Pastoral Minister

Camille Flynn, Administrative Assistant

Office Phone: 631-475-0381 | Fax: 631-475-3132

Email: PatchogueUMC@Yahoo.com

Office temporarily closed

Worship Video Live Streaming at PatchogueUMC.Org

Previous services available.

All services and church activities canceled until further notice.



## Easter Flowers

**B**ecause there will not be an Easter service this year, there also will be no Easter flowers.

Thank you to all who have sent in order forms. If you paid by check, your check will be returned to you. No check for Easter flowers has been deposited. If you paid with cash, a refund check will be mailed to you.

If you have any questions, please call me at 631-654-0038, or email me at gailshoag@gmail.com.

Thank you for your support of our altar flowers.

Have a blessed Easter.

—Gail Hoag

## Matthew 28 Easter Prayer

**“Do not be afraid,”**

God, I hand over to You those things that make me so afraid.

Resurrect the parts of my faith squelched by fear.

**"I know that you are looking for Jesus,"**

God, when my soul is searching, help me know the answer to every longing can be found in You.

**"He has risen,"**

God, the fact that Jesus is risen should lift my head, my heart and my attitude. Help me to live today as if I really believe this with every part of my life.

**"just as he said,"**

Jesus, You keep Your promises. Help me live as though I believe that

with every part of me. Help me trust You more, obey You more and resemble You more.

**"Come and see,"**

Jesus, You had the angels invite the women in to see for themselves that You had risen. You invite me into these personal revelations every day. Forgive me for sometimes rushing about and forgetting to come and see for myself ... You, Your Word, Your insights.

**"Then go quickly and tell his disciples,"**

Jesus, I don't want to be a secret keeper with my faith. I want to be a bold and gracious truth proclaimer. For You. With You. Because of You. Me, the unwanted girl whom You loved, redeemed and wanted. Amen

—Lysa TerKeurst, [crosswalk.com](http://crosswalk.com)