

The LINK



UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF PATCHOGUE

Since 1791

May 2020

We Are Not Home Alone

Some may remember the classic movie from the 90's, *Home Alone*.

It was about this eight-year-old boy who had to defend his home from two burglars after his family mistakenly left him behind on their Christmas vacation.

It, of course, was meant to be a comedy—and it was. Well, many of us are feeling as if we were left behind and home alone due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

And it is not two burglars we are defending against—it is this unseen perpetrator that is not comedic, but rather serious and potentially deadly.

I have been receiving emails and phone calls from church members and friends and family who express to me that this

somewhat “Home Alone” lock-in is beginning to wear on them. It is causing a mild form of depression.

Others have had their exercise routines disrupted due to the closing of gyms—thus, they are putting on a few pounds and no longer feel comfortable in their bodies. Routines have been disturbed and things to do around the house are becoming boring and unproductive.

I can fully appreciate all of these feelings, even though I am not home alone and am fortunate enough to have my wife with me.

So, how can we cope with this “Home Alone” directive by the government? Well, first of all, we will not be in this place and feel this way forever. That is something to look forward to.

But you know what I have found; I have

discovered that this time of lock-down has provided me more time to focus on God and His Word—the Bible.

It reminds me that God will never leave or forsake us, even in the midst of a pandemic. God was saying to me, “Don’t fill your time with empty and meaningless things.”

In other words, don’t remain glued to the television, soaking in all the negative news. I believe to do this just intensifies our anxiety and depression.

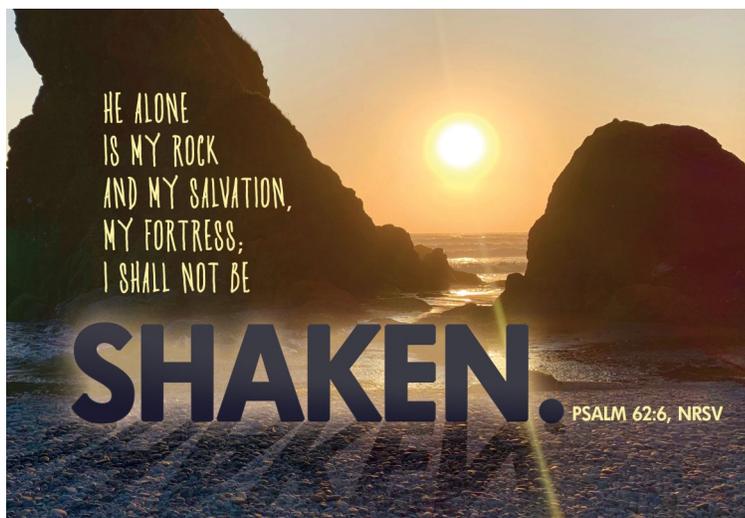
Continued on Page 2

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. We have a new online offering option on our website. You can also mail a check or arrange through your bank’s website to have one mailed automatically.



Circle of Concern

Greiving:

Dan Stewart who lost his wife Lois to cancer, and their family

The family of Mike Iarocci who died in late April. (Diane Zimmerman)

The family of Bryan Danzinger of the Medford Fire Department who lost his battle with coronavirus. (Diane Zimmerman)

Healing:

6 year old Nicholas Grizopolous diagnosed with a malignant brain tumor and additional nodules, possible Stage IV. (Kathy Halliwell)

Brian Laubes, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.

(Dave Hollowell)

COVID-19:

Don Anderson, James Kelly, Pastor John Espisito, Pat Giangrande, Greg Ingigneri, Linda, Claire, Godfrey, Debbie Kelly, Ellen, Allison Zentgraf

Joy:

For all those who have recovered from this virus.

Continued Prayers:

Kimberly Helfst, Yount Family, Hicks Family, Kenny Family, Lola Schwartz, JoAnn Synder, Bill, Gina, Diane, Thomas Schaff, Bill Hurley, Elijah, Michael (Barbara Becker's brother), Bruce Kirschner, Jennifer Higbie, Lawrence & Family, Tyler Ferrari, Sabrina, Ed Klingel, Laura Clifford, Lucille Taylor, Baby Abigail, Violet Kileen, Rob Weber, James Loris, Charlie Moreno, Annabelle Dasano, Marion Lyons, Lynn Russo, Robert Schneider, Jr., Eileen Thompson, Maryellen Strieb Camacho, Richard Pomponio, Ronald Lyons, John Horyczum

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.*

Maintaining Financial Support

Although we don't have the option of dropping our offering in the Sunday plate these days, it is important that we keep the donations coming. Our staff continues to be employed and all other expenses continue as well.

To help make donations, through the NY Annual Conference, we have set up an offering link on our website, www.patchogueumc.com.

Here are the instructions:

Click on the donate **HERE** link on the website's front page. Complete all fields asking for donor information.

In the field "Amount you are Giving Today", type in the amount of your donation, In the field "Church to which your donation will be directed" Choose "Patchogue, NY: Patchogue UMC" from the drop-down menu.

Continued on Page 8

Home Alone (From Page 1)

Psalm 16:11 states, "You will show me the path of life; in your presence is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore." We should keep in mind that we are not "Home Alone"—rather when we regularly seek God, even in the midst of aloneness, we will have the fullness of joy and peace.

As the Apostle Paul rightly stated in Philippians 4:19, "And my God shall supply all of your needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Hear that again, "**ALL YOUR NEEDS!**" But Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:33 that we have to **INTENTIONALLY SEEK it.**

Friends, I leave you with a word from James 4:8, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." Take the time each day to pull away from CNN or FOX News and draw close to God in prayer and the reading of His Word.

If you don't know where to begin, try reading a Psalm each day. Begin by reading a little of the Gospel of John each day. I promise you that you will not be disappointed and you won't feel as if you are "Home Alone."

In His Grip,

—Pastor Chuck

May Birthdays

May 11 Noah Lyons

May 11 Robert Queen



Please **PRAY** for those affected by **COVID-19**



COVID-19 Is Not God's Judgement

A prominent church where I live put up a billboard that drew citywide attention: "Is the coronavirus a judgment from God?" This is the most common question I've been asked since the pandemic began.

It's easy to quote the Bible in support of such positions, from plagues in Egypt to the destruction of Jerusalem to the Book of Revelation's prediction that the world will be judged with "pestilence."

However, these are not those days. We can know this for two reasons. First, biblical judgments through disease are supernatural in origin. When God sent "boils" on Egypt, they broke out instantly "on man and beast" throughout the land. The "pestilence" of Revelation will come by one of the "four horsemen of the apocalypse," not a wet market in Wuhan.

Everything scientists can tell us about COVID-19 is that the virus evolved from other viruses. It is natural, not supernatural. God did not cause this virus or the pandemic it has created. Like other natural disasters, it is a consequence of living in a fallen world.

Second, biblical judgments are against specific sins and sinners. From Pharaoh's obstinacy to Miriam's racial prejudice to Herod's prideful idolatry, divine judgments of the past and future come to those who refuse his word and will. Throughout Scripture and history, God deals with us as gently as he can or as harshly as he must.

No specific sins caused this virus. Nor are those who are afflicted with it more sinful than the rest of us. God loves the Chinese people just as much as he loves Italians, Koreans, and Americans. He loves the elderly and those with preexisting conditions just as much as he loves the young and the healthy.

One fact this pandemic emphasizes is that we are all part of one race—the human race. And we are all in this together.

While God did not cause this pandemic, neither has he left us to face it alone.

He is with health care workers as they risk their lives to care for patients. He is with grocery workers and delivery drivers as they serve those who can stay safely at home because of their sacrifice. He is with those who are now unemployed and those

who would shelter at home if they had one.

He is with patients who suffer and families who grieve. As Jesus wept for Lazarus, so he weeps with us and for us.

And God is doing more than hurting with us—he is redeeming this tragedy in amazing ways.

We're seeing an outpouring of financial generosity unprecedented in my lifetime. We're watching churches and agencies that would never have cooperated two months ago working together to save lives. Millions of people around the world are sacrificing their incomes by staying home to protect people they don't know.

In the season of Passover, Jews around the world were thanking God for their deliverance from Egypt.

With Ramadan, Muslims around the world are thanking God for the Qur'an. Christians recently observed Good Friday and celebrated Easter as we thanked God for our Savior.

Our monotheistic faiths differ in foundational ways, but we share this belief in common: God is with us. As a song I learned in my childhood reminds us: He didn't bring us this far to leave us.

—Jim Dennison, *Christianity Today*

Bishop Bickerton's April 22 Update

Yesterday I opened my mail to find a “prayer square” sent to me by a friend in Ohio. This is the fourth “prayer square” or “pocket prayer shawl” I have received in the last couple of weeks.



This kind and wonderful gesture encourages the recipient to hold the piece of cloth in their hand or place it in their pocket as a reminder to trust in God's grace in times of need. With the news of my father's infection from the Coronavirus, as well as the steady number of reports flowing into my office of others who are infected, these gentle reminders of the ties that bind us together in loving devotion and prayer mean so very much.

Even though there is not a prayer shawl attached with this latest update, there is attached a sincere prayer and a genuine concern for each of you. You remain in my prayers each day and, as the Apostle Paul said, “I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy.” (2 Timothy 1:4)

The news filling the air waves is providing words of encouragement about the flattening of the curve of this virus. Hospital admissions, intubations, and death rates are dropping. Yet, the news is also filled with emerging anxieties. Mental health difficulties, cabin fever, economic struggles, and questions of when to re-open are now growing. Adding to

the struggle is the reality that different regions of the country are responding in different ways based on their context.

Here is the latest update from my office:

Churches in the New York Annual Conference will Remain Closed. We will continue to take our lead from the decisions made by our state government officials. Governor Cuomo of New York has extended his stay at home order until May 15th. Governor Lamont of Connecticut has extended his until May 20th.

For that reason, our churches will remain closed through May 24th at the earliest. I know that this is difficult. But we must stay the course and continue to remain focused. We all will be tempted by reports coming from other parts of the country where restrictions will be significantly reduced and eliminated. But please remember, there is no place in the country that has faced more illness and death than our region.

For example, over 95% of all the cases in New York are found within the bounds of our Annual Conference. The containment strategies put in place are for our protection. We also must remember that, for the most part, our local church constituency base is populated by the people most vulnerable to this infection.

We will evaluate our next steps moving forward once we receive direction from these officials but, for now, we will remain closed.

Be Mindful of Grief, Anxiety, and Self-care

These are days that demand much from everyone in leadership, both lay

and clergy alike. Much of what is being asked of us is a part of our own personal “new norm.”

Many of us have never experienced or been asked to lead in the midst of such times

On a normal day, when a person loses a loved one to death, grief can be consuming. But in the midst of days when proper goodbyes and respectful funeral services are not possible, grief can be overwhelming—not only for the loved ones involved but also for the ones called of God to provide pastoral care.

These are tender times, ones that will demand days of hard work. But they are days that will also demand times of intentional self-care. Read the scriptures. Dive into daily devotions. Remain in touch with your need for a spiritual friend or colleague to talk with. Take care of yourself even as you are caring for others.

Begin Planning for What's Next

It is my prayer that we will be reopening our churches in the not too distant future. But until then, we have the gift of being able to begin imagining what that day will be like. We can also begin working for that day with intentional planning.

Over the last few days I have read two articles about those plans. In this letter I want to adapt for our context an article by Ken Braddy entitled, *24 Questions Your Church Should Answer Before People Return*.

In the article, Braddy provides some excellent things to ponder as you begin planning for the day when we will reopen our churches for public gatherings. Here are some suggestions I

would commend to you in your discernment:

Plan for multiple services

If our churches are limited in the number of people who can gather, even churches that worship less than one hundred may need to begin thinking about multiple services during the course of a day in order to provide proper social distancing.

Plan to continue live streaming

It would be a tragic mistake if any of our churches ceased having virtual worship once we are allowed to reassemble in person. This opportunity is providing us with an insight into 21st century evangelism and is revealing the needs that people have for hope and meaning in their lives. Make plans now to invest in the kind of equipment that will help you go to the next level in this ministry.

Rethink how you receive an offering

In this new normal of virtual worship, every one of our churches is going to have to think about compelling ways for people to give. Before the virus we were worrying about the sustainability of many of our churches. That has increased due to the pandemic. Online giving must become a part of our future. And, besides that, given social distancing and fears of a resurgence, passing the plate in a worship service may not be the best way to collect an offering in person moving forward.

Begin thinking now about how things like Vacation Bible School and ongoing Sunday School & Children's Church may need to be altered for this season.

What are you doing now to sanitize and sterilize your church build-

ing? Now is the time to be doing these important functions.

If social distancing regulations are recommended, how will you deal with things like "Passing the Peace," Greeters, and creating an atmosphere that is respectful but also welcoming?

Continue to Live into our Principles

In his daily press conference, Governor Andrew Cuomo says that our first rule should be to "Do No Harm." We've heard that before, haven't we? In fact, it comes directly out of our own history. But there is more. We are not only to "do no harm," our Wesleyan roots also direct us to "do good," and "stay in love with God." Please remember, this is not a time for "me," it is a time for "we."

As Galatians states, "do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become servants to one another."

Don't use your freedom to harm someone else. Don't take a chance or make decisions that may have negative impacts on the people you serve. Continue to create opportunities for high touch with no touch.

Remember that there are 430 other churches in the New York Annual Conference besides yours who are trying their best to be faithful as well. Pray for one another. Intercede for one another. And above all else, love one another.

In her wonderful book, *Out of the Ordinary: Prayers, Poems, and Reflections for Every Season*, Joyce Rupp shares this wonderful poem, entitled *Blessing Prayer for Healing*:

May you desire to be healed.

May what is wounded in your life be restored to good health.

May you be receptive to the ways in which healing needs to happen.

May you take good care of yourself.

May you extend compassion to all that hurts within your body, mind, spirit.

May you be patient with the time it takes to heal.

May you be aware of the wonders of your body, mind, and spirit and their amazing capacity to heal.

May the skills of all those who are caring for you be used to the best of their ability in returning you to good health.

May you be open to receive from those who extend kindness, care, and compassion to you.

May you rest peacefully under the sheltering wings of divine love, trusting in this gracious presence.

May you find little moments of beauty and joy to sustain you.

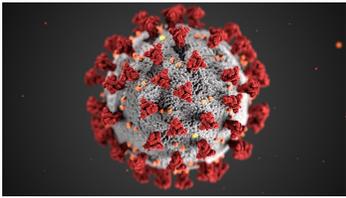
May you keep hope in your heart.

This is my prayer for you and for all the people you faithfully serve. I pray it today, for you, holding a pocket prayer shawl from someone who cares.

The Journey Continues, . . .

—Thomas Bickerton,
Resident Bishop

"Blessing Prayer for Healing" taken from Out of the Ordinary ©2000 by Joyce Rupp. Used by permission of Ave Maria Press. All rights reserved.



COVID-19 Could Push The Church Toward Change

The United Methodist Church is scrambling to meet the threat of COVID-19, and some church leaders say changes prompted by the crisis may be worth holding onto after it passes.

“The other day I said to one of my colleagues, ‘That is such a pre-coronavirus perspective,’” said Bishop Sally Dyck, resident bishop of the Chicago area. “I hope we apply a post-coronavirus perspective that life is fragile and life is random.

“We’re not in control,” she said. “We have wanted to control the church. We have wanted to control God. We have wanted to control each other. And controlling is a pre-coronavirus perspective.”

More than 58,000 people in the U.S. have died of COVID-19 since Jan. 21, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. More than a million cases have been reported as of April 29.

Technology has played the most visible role for the church in addressing the pandemic.

First United Methodist Church of Miami brought on a new staff member to help with virtual ministry. The Rev. Audrey Warren, senior pastor, said they’ll keep that person on staff post-coronavirus.

“We look to expand into that world,

especially because in Miami we’re such a transient city,” Warren said. “People come into our church for three or four years, and then they move, and sometimes they have a hard time finding a new church.”

The Miami church has experienced success with moving small groups online, and also set up a prayer chain group that is doing well.

Warren visualizes a virtual church with members around the globe, with perhaps an annual homecoming service hosted at the Miami sanctuary.

In a timely coincidence, Warren is publishing a book in August through Abingdon Press about the need to put United Methodist resources more into people than property. Co-written with Bishop Kenneth Carter of the Florida Conference, the book is titled “Fresh Expressions of People over Property: Scripture, Stories and Strategies to Help People of Faith Reimagine their Space.”

“The last chapter of the book focuses on this pandemic a little bit, and how it furthermore emphasizes how possibly our funding might be more directed toward people than property,” Warren said.

“It is a time in our personal lives for learning, ‘What do I need to let go?’ It also calls us as a church to ask the same question.”

Such concepts could be a tough sell to many churches.

Cornerstone United Methodist Church in New Orleans hosts Bible studies using Facebook and has started a telephone prayer line for church members who aren’t as technically savvy, said the Rev. Johnathan Carl-

ton Richardson, senior pastor.

“Cornerstone luckily was sort of prepared for (online services and meetings),” he said.

Although the structure for online services was already in place when the pandemic happened, the culture of the city may not be conducive in the long term to a concept like virtual church.

“New Orleans has a very hospitable culture,” Richardson said. “It’s pressing against that very welcoming, socializing culture which makes New Orleans the international city that it is.”

Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey, resident bishop of the Louisiana Area, said Easter 2020 was the first time in some 60 years that she did not physically attend a church service.

“But I’ve been in more worship services than ever, with this technology on Sunday morning,” Harvey said. “There are some people doing livestream, there are people who prerecorded worship and then played it on Facebook at the appointed hour.”

Comparing COVID-19 with 9/11 and World War II, Harvey said there might not be a path back to where the church was before the pandemic.

“Perhaps our playbook that we have now will become irrelevant,” she said. “I believe that we have a different kind of future in front of us. We have to now begin to imagine what that might look like.”

The online world is far from perfect, Harvey said.

Continued on Page 8

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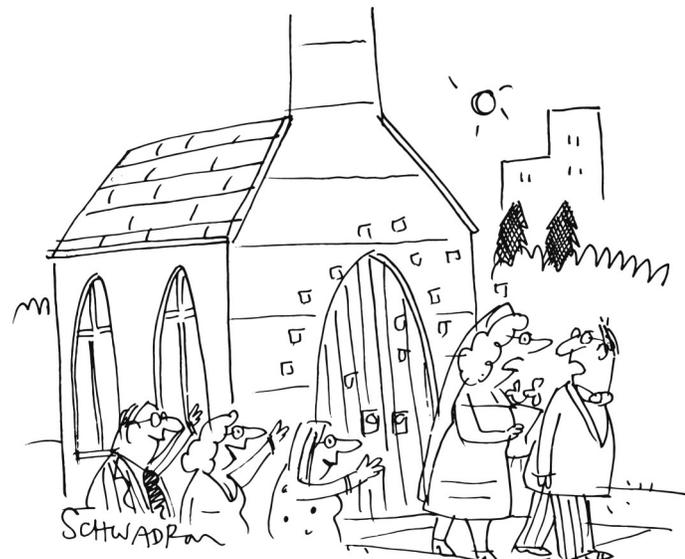
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The deadline for the June issue
of **The Link** is May 22.
Please email your copy to gbhoag@optonline.net.

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Worship Video Live Streaming at PatchogueUMC.Org

Previous services available.

All services and church activities canceled until further notice.



Church Change (From Page 7)

“Yes, there’s buffering,” she said. “The lighting is not always great. But they are connecting in ways I think are making a huge difference to people. We’re preaching the Gospel. So we’re back to long before, when we gathered on street corners. These are our new street corners.”

If more church connections are moving to the virtual world, finances might become an issue, she said.

“Unfortunately, this is a huge problem financially for our churches when you’re not meeting,” Harvey said.

“Although some churches say giving has continued, I would imagine at some point that that’s not going to be so.”

—Jim Patterson, UMNS

Financial Support (From Page 2)

On the next field enter the pastor’s name, Charles Ferrara (this information will be used by the conference to validate that the correct church was selected).

Click on the BLUE BAR at the bottom of the screen.

On the next screen click on the GREEN BUTTON that says “Pay Now”.

Enter your PayPal, Credit or debit card information (no PayPal account is needed). All transaction fees will be borne by the Conference for two months.

Once submitted, you will receive an e-mail confirming your donation.

All donations will be forwarded to the church weekly from the Conference.

For Those Asking, “God Are You There?”

God,

I’ve never really talked to you before. Are you really there? Can you really hear me? I know people who claim to know you and they don’t seem as afraid as I do. I don’t want to be so afraid. If I knew that you were real, I would want to trust in you. Would you help me to believe? If you’re real, would you open my eyes and heart to you? Would you give me faith to believe in you and trust you? While I’m stuck at home, would you please guide me to online sources where I can learn more about you. I want to know you’re real and I want to know the comfort that you give to your people.

—crosswalk.com