



He is Risen!



"SpiritSpark"

**The First Baptist Church
of Manchester Center, VT**

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Pastor: Rev. Rebecca Sommons

APRIL 2020

A MESSAGE FROM PASTOR REBECCA

Dear Church Family,

So much has changed in the last month! It is hard to get our bearings. We are all adjusting to the new directives about sheltering at home to prevent the hospitals and medical staff from being overwhelmed with people who need of treatment for the corona virus. It is no longer safe to meet together in person, so we are learning new ways to connect through computers. Many of the things we assumed would always be open for us are closed. But when one door closes, God opens a window.

For instance, today I set off for a walk in the sunshine with my friend Maurie Hill (being careful to keep six feet of distance between us, of course). We were halfway around the mile-long loop at the Rec park, when a policeman called out that the park was closed and we would need to leave. We were both disappointed, but walked home to Maurie's house. I had hoped to walk to the bridge between the park and Riley rink, because it is my favorite place to pray. On the way through town, I decided to try praying on the bridge in town instead. The sparkling water gently flowed away from me, as I opened my hands to release my anxiety, the people I love, my disappointment about not getting to be on vacation this week, my gratitude, my frustration, my worship and love, and my availability to God.

After I felt empty and peaceful, I walked around the traffic circle to the other side of the bridge, where the water flowed toward me. I couldn't help but notice how it was the reverse of the

bridge in the woods where I usually pray. Here, the water was rushing, flowing over rocks in the path. Usually opening my hands to receive what I need from God for the day is the peaceful part, but here in this place, things were moving quickly. It seemed like a reflection of the rapid changes in our lives and reminded me of the many reversals I've noticed.

Stay-at-home parents, teachers, truck-drivers, scientists, farmers, grocery store workers, people who clean, and medical staff of every kind are now recognized for the challenging work they do and the valuable contributions they make to our daily lives. The busyness of non-stop sporting events and various other gatherings has come to a screeching halt, and many people are getting both quantity and quality time with their families. Pollution across the globe is being dramatically reduced. We see what is possible when we pull together and cooperate in an effort, and how our actions and attitudes affect the community. Many are also recognizing that we are not in control of life, and beginning to look up to the One who holds this world together.

20/20 is perfect vision. I think that 2020 is God's world-wide invitation to see things more clearly, realizing what truly matters. It seems likely that the reversals are an indication that God's kingdom is breaking through. Maybe we are in the transition part of the labor the Earth has been in for many years (Romans 8:18-25). Contractions come quickly in this stage. It seems like we might be dying, but with God, death is only a passage to new life. Will you listen and pray with me, so we can see and hear clearly how God wants us to move through this time? Will you embrace the incredible opportunities the disruption of the status quo opens? Change is both frightening and exciting. Let's give our fears to God each time they rise up, and let the excitement energize our love and creativity in harmony with God's will.

For our present troubles are small and won't last very long.

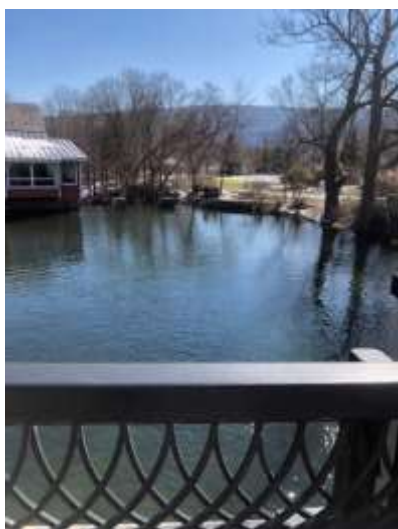
Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever.

So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen.

For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.

2 Corinthians 4:17-18

Grace and Peace,
Pastor Rebecca





*Let the little children
come to me.*

Dylan and Jessica
Beavin brought Caleb
and Chase to be
dedicated.

Pictured here with
grandmother, Sara, great
grandmother, Lois, and
big brother, Carter.

Missions Committee

The Rwanda Dinner, previously scheduled for April 26th, will be rescheduled. We continue to look forward to this presentation by Matthew and Pastor Rebecca.

Thank you to the women who cleaned up the church upon the completion of the renovation. It was much needed and much appreciated!

Linda Bushee presented a mission moment for the America for Christ offering in March. An offering was collected for the three Sundays we had church service, but it is not too late to make your offering for this important work.

In May, Linell Pike will give an update on the missionary work of Jeni Pedzinski in Thailand. At this time, Jenny is planning to remain in Thailand through the pandemic. Prayers for her health and safety would be appreciated.

In March, because of your generosity, we were able to send \$320.00 to the Lebanon Baptist Church in New Hampshire who lost their church to fire. We also sent our quarterly commitment of \$105.00 for our student, Leon.

We receive many appeals each month. You may support our ongoing missionary work by writing “missions” in the memo portion of your offering check.

Thank you for your generosity!

Linell Pike, Secretary



Mary & Martha Fellowship

The Mary Martha Fellowship (MMF) met on Feb. 9th using our nearly completed kitchen for the first time.

At this time, we discussed the Basket Party which was scheduled for March 28th. Because of Covid-19 many plans have changed for the Fellowship including postponing the Basket Party and putting off a Pork Roast Dinner.

There was discussion about finances and the motion was made by Ashley Hess that MMF increase the amount of our church pledge from \$50 a month to \$150 a month. At the same time, we will decrease our monthly pledge to the Food Cupboard from \$100 to \$50.

Lorraine Wilkins shared the need for a new refrigerator and MMF, with a motion from Barb West and seconded by Lorraine, voted to buy a new refrigerator and set aside up to but not exceeding \$900 for this purchase.

Linda Bushee and Dot Beers have cleaned silverware from the kitchen that needed cleaning.

Our next meeting would normally be on April 11th, preparing flowers for the Easter cross. It is uncertain what will happen on Easter, but we are going to go ahead and decorate the cross with greens and red carnations. If we have a service, it can be the focus. If not, the decorated cross will be placed on the church steps for the community to enjoy. The palms will also be ordered and since we may not meet on Palm Sunday the community and church members will be invited to stop by and take a palm or two as a symbol of Palm Sunday. These palms will be placed outside the doors of the church and the signboards will reflect this invitation.

There will be no regular meeting of MMF in April, but are there a couple of volunteers who would be willing to decorate the cross with the greens and carnations on Saturday the 11th at 9:00 A.M.? Also, will someone volunteer to bring the cross up from Joy Hall?

The MMF has a good supply of toilet paper and would be willing to provide a roll or two to help anyone who needs help. Let Lisa Towslee or Rebecca Sommons know.

Martha Thompson, Secretary

Mary & Martha Basket Party & Kitchen Items

Basket Party - I have rescheduled the Basket Party for May 9th at the VFW. I do realize that may have to change again. I am willing to do a basket party whenever we can get the go ahead to again resume our everyday activities. If it is summertime, I think we should talk about a different fundraiser, perhaps a tag/bake sale. Then we can schedule a Basket Party in early fall. Of course, we also have the Ham & Strawberry Supper slated at the moment for the end of June. We will have to wait and see how things play out and deal with it then. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Kitchen Items - Several people have asked me what items we still need in the kitchen. I can think of just a few right now. (a plastic tub for washing dishes, etc. a magnetic curtain rod to hang dish towels on the end of the metal drain counter, and a few plastic (resin) whatever they are made of cutting boards.

Wooden ones are not good as the wood splinters over time.) If anyone is willing to donate any of these items, please let me know.

~submitted by Lorraine Wilkins

Interfaith Council of the Northshire

At the last meeting of the council, Scott Buckner, Council Chair, commented on our community's outpouring when the Pittsburgh synagogue was attacked. He suggested the idea that another community gathering might be appropriate. Discussion centered around a community sing-a-long at Israel Congregation with a pot luck supper or other refreshments. This could be a fundraiser for some local organization. Jim Gray mentioned that he thinks it should be centered around a spiritual or religious event. The event was tentatively scheduled for April 29th but that may no longer be possible. Stay tuned.

Neighbor to Neighbor

The Steering Committee of Neighbor to Neighbor met and discussed how we could best serve our Care Recipients during this Covid-19 virus Pandemic.

The care recipients were called to make sure that each one had the support needed to stay safely in their homes. Offers were made to food shop, do errands, make regular phone calls or, as always, provide transportation. Many people seemed to have a good network available for food and errands. The biggest request was for regular phone calls.

Neighbor to Neighbor decided that we would not be hosting a Pie Auction this year but plan on doing it next year.

~submitted by Martha Thompson

Diaconate Committee

Our Fellowship Fund is one of the ways we all can help our church family in times of crisis. We may provide grocery or gas gift cards or other temporary financial assistance as necessary. Please continue to give to this vital part of our ministry as you are able.

During this time of uncertainty, it's important for us to stay connected as much as possible. We want to know that you are well and we want to help you if you need anything. The Diaconate decided that one way we could share this responsibility with Pastor Rebecca was by forming Shepherd's Groups, which we did at our last meeting.

Please do not hesitate to contact any of the diaconate members if you need anything or if you just want to talk. We are here for you.

Cara Davenport, Anna Ennis, John Hess, Carol Lattuga, Linell Pike, Martha Thompson, Jim West, Kelsey Towslee and Pastor Rebecca.

Submitted by,
Kelsey Towslee

Prudential Committee

Hello Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

There are so many changes in our world that have affected our church community. We are working hard to maintain the church for when we are allowed to worship together again. Let us pray for a quick resolution to the outbreak affecting our community, country, and world. First, the kitchen is now complete! We hope the new kitchen will serve the Lord and our community for years to come. While the space was open in the kitchen floor, the sewer pipe failure was fixed with a new sewage pump, and the foundation was encapsulated with spray foam. Thank you to the many workers who made this project possible. We also replaced the flooring in the vestry bathroom and the Bonnet Street entrance.

During a recent congregational meeting, the congregation approved the use of endowment funds to replace the recently discovered knob-and-tube wiring that is still in use above the sanctuary, add an electrical sub-panel, and tune-up the slate roof. The withdraw from the endowment and the work will begin after the current pandemic passes and the workers are allowed to come work on the building. The best news related to our project is that the Vermont Interfaith Power and Light organization approved our grant request for insulating the foundation and attic spaces. Lisa just received the first half of the funds. The remaining requested funds will be sent once the attic spaces are complete.

With our community and state functioning within the stay-at-home order of Gov. Scott, our church will continue to adapt with the online tools which will allow us to praise our Lord and worship together until our time of returning to the sanctuary.

Humbly submitted for His glory,
Jeremy Crumb, Prudential Committee Chairperson



Our stove is now sparkling thanks to Lisa and Ashley Hess and Lisa and Chris Towslee! It is seen here sporting its new hood!

The women of the Mary & Martha Fellowship provided a beautiful new refrigerator!

It is not possible to thank everyone who helped with the renovation of our kitchen because many people came in and did things when no one was looking! However, we do want to thank Jim Comar, who came in following the painters and did second coats and touch-ups and thank you to Lorraine Wilkins who spent hours in packing up and then unpacking and finding places for our many items.

And, no thank you would be complete without acknowledging Jeremy Crumb! He has played an active, hands-on role from the beginning. We thank him for his leadership, his problem solving, his patience and the many hours he has put into this project! Thank you, Jeremy!


Community Food Cupboard – submitted by CFC Board Member, Jim West

The Community Food Cupboard is focusing on how we can meet the needs of people facing hunger or lacking food access for any reason. We are closely monitoring the situation and planning for increased and shifting community needs. We want to ensure the highest quality safety standards and preventative measures are met in sanitizing and safeguarding our facility and personnel to protect our Vermont community.

- Food will still be available for pick-up. We will be packing grocery boxes containing about a week's worth of food. These will be available for curbside pick up to anyone who is isolating due to health concerns or to families with children in the event of school closings.
- We are also planning to increase home or neighborhood deliveries as much as our available food supply allows and volunteers are able. As the weather allows we will also shift our distribution outdoors.
 - We encourage anyone who needs help accessing food to please contact us. This includes anyone with a temporary job loss due to Coronavirus.
- If we must change practices, we will keep the community advised on our website and Facebook page.
- We are implementing additional food safety measures, including multiple additional sanitization steps in all food collections and distributions.
- We ask both our volunteers and patrons to call instead of visit if they may have been exposed to the virus or are in a high risk group.

The Community Food Cupboard remains committed to ensuring that everyone in our community has access to nutritious food. As we go forth we will do all we can to keep our most vulnerable populations safe.

During this time, we also turn to everyone in our community to help in any way they are able. We are seeking volunteers and financial donations. Please get in touch if you are interested in helping us package or deliver food. You can reach us by phone at 802-362-0057, email us through the link on our website, communityfoodcupboard.org, send snail mail to PO Box 864, Manchester Center VT, 05255, or reach out through our Facebook page. Your financial donations are also especially important right now and your help makes it possible for us to respond quickly in this emergency. As always we are tremendously grateful for everyone who makes our work possible.



Did you know that your First Baptist Church has a Prayer Team? There are about 25 people who have committed to praying for each submitted prayer request. Prayer requests are kept confidential. When asking for prayer for someone other than yourself, please ask permission to add them to our prayer list. If you or someone you know needs prayer, send it to fbchurchatprayer@gmail.com. Although we don't keep official track, we have had over 400 prayer requests since we started in Oct 2018 and, because the information is on our church website, we have had requests from all over the world.

In place of the monthly "Calendar of Events", we are providing this list of activities and meetings through April 15th. Many of these are using Zoom. This is an app that can be used on your computer or smart phone. An invitation to each zoom meeting or service will be sent to your email. To participate, you just need to click on the link embedded in the email. This sends you to a virtual waiting room where the person who sent the invitation (usually Pastor Rebecca) can then let you in. You will need to enable the video feature on your phone or computer if you would like to appear in the meeting and see others who are there. You can keep your microphone muted when you are not speaking or singing and turn it on when you want to use your voice to participate.

Tuesdays at 7 pm: Prayer Group / Book Study We are planning to meet EVERY week online for prayer. Our book discussions will take place every other week. If you have not participated before and would like to join us OR if you would like to join us for the "prayer only weeks", let Pastor Rebecca know.

Sundays at 10:30 am: Our Sunday service through Zoom (We plan to record and post this on the website and FBC Facebook page afterwards.)

Thursday, April 2: Interfaith Council meeting at noon There will be an online invitation coming from Scott Buckner.

Friday, April 3: Deacon meeting (Zoom) at 2 pm

Saturday April 4: The retreat that was planned for this day is available online now (FBC Facebook page and on the church website)

Sunday, April 5: Palm Sunday (Zoom) 10:30 service

Sunday, April 12: Worship through Zoom at 10:30 am

Tuesday, April 14: Prudential Meeting (Zoom) at 5 pm

Missions Sunday was scheduled for April 26th but may need to be rescheduled.

IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

Church Office Hours 9:30-12:30 AM on Tuesdays and Wednesdays

Pastor Rebecca's e-mail address: rebeccasommons@gmail.com

Pastor Rebecca's cell phone: (802) 688-3024

Church office Phone: (802) 362-1555

Please call to request a meeting or visit outside of regular church office hours.

FLOWERS

April 5: Jenny Sprague (Palms will be placed at the doors of the church. You are invited to stop by and pick up a couple.)

April 12: Easter (greens & carnations for cross)

April 19: Jim W (probably not needed)

April 26: Peggy B (probably not needed)

We are not scheduling CHILDCARE PROVIDERS at this time. They will be scheduled once we resume services.

