

Physically Apart, Together in Spirit



The COVID-19 pandemic launched many churches into new territory on March 23. That was the date Governor Ralph Northam's Executive Order 53 limited public gatherings in Virginia, closing church buildings for in-person worship for the next eight weeks.

With little warning, pastors, specialized ministers, church leaders, volunteers, and staff were faced with reimagining their ministries. They swung into action with remarkable agility.

From YouTube to videoconferencing services like Zoom, congregations embraced technology to connect. Websites and Facebook became critical communication tools.

In a survey of presbytery churches in late May, 80 percent of respondents indicated their church was offering a remote video worship option. About one third reported that Bible studies and Sunday School classes for adults, youth, and children had moved online as well.

People seemed to appreciate the investment of time and funds in alternatives to in-person worship. Three quarters of survey respondents said their congregation has had a mostly positive response to adaptations made.

See TOGETHER on page 6

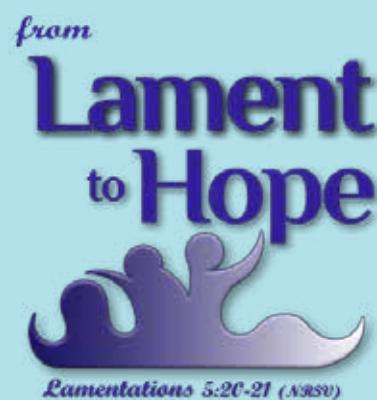
Responding to the Sin of Racism and a Call to Action

On the Church in This Moment in History

The 224th General Assembly of the PC(USA) declares that Black lives matter; that our country's most important institutions have been built to sustain white privilege, to protect white lives and white property at the expense of our siblings of color; and that the church, through ignorance, denial, and in some cases deliberate action, has participated in this injustice. We have been slow to face the reality of systemic racism. We have been slow to acknowledge the pain of our fellow Presbyterians, of our fellow Christians, of our fellow citizens, and of those who have come to America for a better life, whose value has been judged by the color of their skin. We pledge to join hands and hearts with our BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) siblings to actively confront and dismantle systemic racism in our church and in society at large, and to work for a more just, merciful, and peaceful country that allows all of God's children to flourish.

The 224th General Assembly:

- Calls all Presbyterians to hear and heed the Gospel imperative to love God, neighbor, and self by living out a deeper commitment to active participation with Jesus Christ in the work of building God's kin-dom through:
 1. Personal and corporate repentance, spiritual renewal, and devotion to the Great Ends of the Church.
 2. Listening and responding to the voices of peoples long silenced.
 3. Energetic, intelligent, imaginative, and loving involvement in the Matthew 25 Initiative and its intertwined foci: building congregational vitality, dismantling structural racism, and eradicating systemic poverty
- Calls congregations, sessions, presbyteries, and synods to review items



of business referred to the 225th General Assembly (2022) and prayerfully consider the call of God to work and witness for the goals and values expressed therein. (Find these at [presbyteryofthejames.com/ga](https://www.presbyteryofthejames.com/ga).)

- Recommends that PC(USA) congregations, mid-councils, and all General Assembly entities develop and adopt an antiracism policy in their bylaws.

We must have our own denominational and congregational houses in order. We must dare to be an image of hope for those around us.

When our colleagues, siblings, and neighbors protest in the streets to say that being Black should never be an excuse to be targeted and killed, when so many stand in solidarity to say #BlackLivesMatter, and when our own communities are weighed down in grief and anger, it is time to stand alongside our BIPOC siblings in voice and in action.

STATED MEETING: June 16, 2020**Ministers, Ruling Elders, and Educators Join in First Virtual Presbytery of the James Meeting****Salisbury Church Hosts Leadership Group**

The 105th stated meeting of the Presbytery of the James was hosted by Salisbury Presbyterian Church and conducted via Zoom webinar on Tuesday, June 16, 2020. Ruling Elder Leigh Anne Ring (Salisbury), moderator, called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and led the presbytery in prayer.

The moderator welcomed first-time ruling elder commissioners and guests, noting in particular colleagues from the Presbytery of Eastern Virginia who were observers, gathering ideas for how to carry out their next presbytery meeting. Moderator Ring enrolled as a corresponding member Rev. Warren Lesane, a minister member of Charlotte Presbytery and executive of the Synod of the Mid-Atlantic.

Some of the highlights of the meeting included:

Rev. Karen Witt (Providence Gum Spring), moderator of the Committee on Ministry's subcommittee on Examinations, welcomed new ministers to the presbytery: Rev. Hyung Joo (Howard) Kim, pastor of Lord Jesus Korean Church (effective August 1), from Whitewater Valley Presbytery; Rev. Derek Starr Redwine, interim pastor of Grace Covenant Church, from the Presbytery of the Western Reserve; and Rev. Bill Nickels, interim pastor of Bon Air Church, from the Presbytery of Eastern Virginia.

Morning worship was led by Rev. Jim King, pastor of Salisbury Church, and the sermon was delivered by Rev. Amy Starr Redwine, pastor of First Church, Richmond. During worship, Ruling Elder Sue Bell (Laurel) was commissioned for particular pastoral service as chaplain for the Henrico County Police Division (Book of Order W-4.0404). Ruling Elder Deborah Rexrode and Moderator Ring led a service of commissioning of commissioners, alternates, and young adult advisory delegate (YAAD) and alternate YAAD to the 224th

General Assembly. Commissioners included Rev. Hyun Chan Bae (Lord Jesus Korean), Ruling Elder Marilyn Johns (The Gayton Kirk), Rev. Brint Pratt Keyes (Lakeside and New Covenant), Ruling Elder Kenna Payne (Westminster Richmond), Ruling Elder Andrew Sanders (River Road), and Rev. Judith Thomson (member at large, Living Water Lutheran, Kilmarnock). Young Adult Advisory Delegate Noah Morgan (Westminster Richmond) was commissioned. Commissioning of the following alternate commissioners took place: Rev. Beverly Bullock (member at large), Rev. Ann Cherry (Laurel), Rev. Patrick Dennis (Tuckahoe), Ruling Elder Lamar Lockhart (Chester), Ruling Elder Cherry Peters (Second Richmond). Bethany Reitsma (South Plains) was commissioned as alternate young adult advisory delegate.

The agenda was approved. A point of personal privilege was requested by Rev. Rosalind Banbury (member at large) to make a statement against racism. The privilege was granted by Moderator Ring and, following the statement, the moderator referred the matter to the Communications and Coordination (C&C) Team and the Dismantling Racism Ministry for their review and response.

The business of the day included:

- Rev. Fred Holbrook, interim general presbyter and stated clerk, shared that 2019 session minutes have been reviewed. He reported that the deadline (July 1) for ministers and certified Christian educators to complete the "Maintaining Boundaries in a Digital Age" training is rapidly approaching. Of about 250 ministers, 128 have completed the training.
- The consent agenda included reports from LCT, MAST, and the Strategic Planning Team.
- The presbytery granted honorably retired status to Rev.

Nancy Clark effective February 20, 2020 and Rev. Janet Winslow effective June 30, 2020.

- Approved a number of nominees to POJ leadership from Ruling Elder Pat Valentine (South Plains), moderator of the Committee on Nominations.
- Approved the motion from the Committee on Preparation for Ministry that, "given the unprecedented logistics of this meeting, presbytery receive Inquirer Jonathan Moelker as a candidate, accepting CPM's interview with him on May 26, 2020 as his examination by presbytery." Moderator Ring led the presbytery in the ceremony of reception of the candidate. Rev. Robert Johnson (New Hanover) charged Candidate Moelker, and Rev. Alexander Evans (Second Richmond) led in the closing prayer.
- Approved the election of an administrative commission requested by New Covenant Church to walk with them through closure and dissolution of the congregation. Current members are Rev. Sarah Nave (Covenant), Ruling Elder Tim Beane (Tuckahoe), and Ruling Elder Susan Edwards (New Covenant). Presbytery authorized the C&C Team to fill remaining vacancies.
- Approved authorizing the C&C Team to appoint an administrative commission for Lakeside Church as they ask presbytery to walk with them through closure and dissolution of the congregation.
- Approved new sabbatical leave guidelines as presented by the Committee on Ministry.
- Approved a recommendation from the COM that the 2021 Minimum Compensation Guidelines remain at the levels approved for 2020.

- Received a report from Camp Hanover's Executive Director Doug Walters including the Board's suspension of summer camp for 2020. He introduced the Isaiah 40 Project, the formation of an intentional community of 8 people who will live and work at Camp this summer for 10 weeks.

With the business of the meeting completed, Moderator Ring exclaimed, "We did it!" She expressed thanks to the planning team for the virtual meeting: Teaching Elder Jess Cook (member at large, More Light Presbyterians); Teaching Elder Patrick Dennis (Tuckahoe); Teaching Elder Brint Pratt Keyes (Lakeside and New Covenant) Ruling Elder Kenna Payne (Westminster Richmond and moderator of C&C Team); and presbytery staff Barbara Espigh, Fred Holbrook, and Franklin Reding. Moderator Ring thanked Teaching Elder Sarah Dennis (Tuckahoe) for designing the Zoom meeting and helping to produce the worship service. She also expressed thanks to others behind the scenes from churches, teams, and staff that made the meeting possible. Special thanks was extended to Rev. Jim King and the Salisbury Church "who hosted a few of us physically and the rest of us virtually for this meeting today."

The moderator announced: "Depending on the conditions of the Commonwealth of Virginia, our October 17 meeting is to be hosted by Orange Presbyterian Church. The leadership will alert you well in advance of that meeting about whether we will meet in person or virtually."

The 105th stated meeting was declared adjourned and Moderator Ring closed in prayer.

In Christ's Service,

Fred A. Holbrook
Interim General Presbyter
and Stated Clerk

UPCOMING PRESBYTERY MEETINGS

October 17, 2020 Orange (Orange)

February 20, 2021 Second (Richmond)

CAMP HANOVER

In the Wilderness, Prepare the Way for the Lord

The Isaiah 40 Project at Camp Hanover

Camp Hanover is in the midst of a very different time of ministry as a result of the challenges created by the coronavirus pandemic. On May 15, the Camp Hanover Board of Directors made the difficult decision to suspend the schedule of overnight camps and day camps for the 2020 summer. At the time of this writing, overnight summer camps remain closed under Governor Northam's executive orders.

Despite the challenges, Camp Hanover is committed to continue its mission to be a place apart for renewal and growth – in different ways, and with significant impact. While it's disappointing Camp Hanover is not currently filled with the joyful sounds of campers singing around the campfire, there are unique opportunities this time of quiet brings.

The Isaiah 40 Project is one such opportunity. For 10 weeks this summer, eight young adults have been invited to live at Camp Hanover and practice love of God, neighbor, and self. In doing so, they will establish an intentional community focused on service, spiritual growth, and personal development.

The participants in The Isaiah 40 Project range in age from 19 to 29 and hail from Virginia, New Jersey, and West Virginia.

Daily life for the members of this intentional community consists of

service work around Camp Hanover—cleaning, painting, improving trails, tending the garden—taking care of this special place for the others who come after them. In the evenings, participants share a meal and spend time in devotion and leadership skills training. The participants also worship together and lead Virtual Vespers for the larger Camp Hanover community.

The Isaiah 40 Project also seeks to bring the Camp Hanover experience to children and youth who normally would be at camp this summer through an initiative called Hanover at Home. The community members are leading a series of weekly events for Camp Hanover fans of all ages such as online campfire singalongs, interactive cookouts, and a homecoming reunion on Zoom.

Later this summer the Isaiah 40 Crew will take the Camp Hanover experience on the road with a special event called the “Magical Mystery Tour.” You can even get a taste of Camp Hanover's famous rolls during the “Rock and Roll Candlelight Dinner” on August 8 hosted by the Isaiah 40 Project participants.

Learn more about the Isaiah 40 Project and follow the story of this intentional community at camphanover.org/isaiah40.

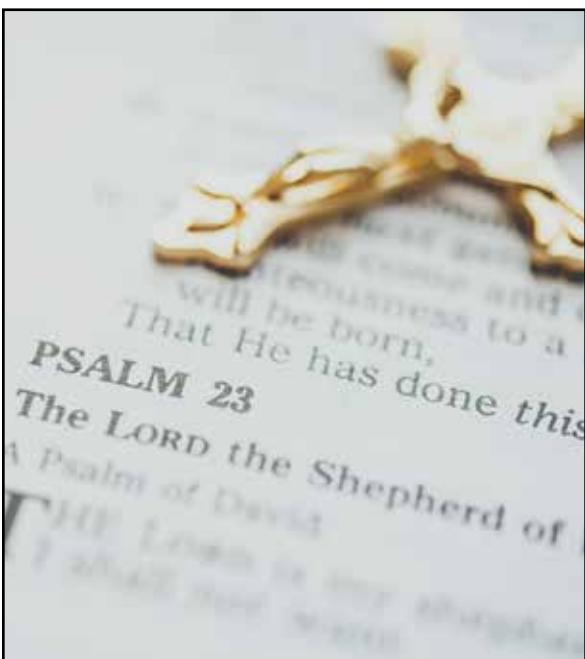


Sing Unto the Lord a New Song

This summer, Camp Hanover is organizing the creation of a Psalter (Book of Psalms). We invite folks with any connection to Camp Hanover to participate: campers, staff, retreat leaders and goers, occasional guests, and anyone who has ever visited or loved this place apart. We envision participants writing the Psalm on one side of an 8.5” x 11” piece of paper and including a short reflection on the reverse side. Feel free to color, draw, collage, highlight, or decorate your page in whatever way is meaningful to you. All contributions will be compiled into a book.

We would love to see every Psalm copied for our Camp Hanover Psalter. If your favorite Psalm has already been chosen, we hope you'll consider another. However, we also want as many people involved as possible, which might mean multiple interpretations of the same Psalm. Contributions are due by August 7, 2020.

For more information and to sign up, visit camphanover.org/psalter, or email Colleen Earp with any questions at colleen@camphanover.org.



New Ministry Serves Incarcerated Youth

In the fall of 2018, youth at Bon Air Juvenile Correctional Center in Chesterfield asked to start a gospel choir. The request reached Rev. Lauren Ramseur and Ashley Diaz Mejias who, with friends, collaborated to support the initiative.

Ramseur and Mejias soon discovered that they were doing church, gathering twice a month at the center for a community of worship. The group named themselves Voices of Jubilee.

Voices of Jubilee volunteers provide pastoral care to choir members through letter writing, community conversations, and visits. They seek mentors in returning citizens (people who were previously incarcerated), who share their stories and inspire hope in the youth.

“Incarceration is a national crisis,” Ramseur shared. “We support our folks who have been impacted by a system of racialized violence.”

At the February 2020 presbytery meeting, the choir became a new worshipping community in the Presbyterian Church (USA). Bon Air Church, where Ramseur is a pastor for children, youth, and families, is Voices of Jubilee’s partner congregation. Also at the meeting, Presbytery of the James approved Mejias for ordination as the organization’s co-pastor with Ramseur and dedicated financial support for it through 2024.

Supporting Youth through COVID-19

In March, Ramseur and Mejias learned that a youth resident and two employees at Bon Air had been diagnosed with COVID-19. Facility administrators requested help providing masks for staff and youth. Voices of Jubilee put out a call to volunteers, friends, and churches. Within five days, they delivered 550 masks.

Soon after, they heard of a similar need at facilities in Richmond. Through a fundraiser that collected \$1,700 in one day, Voices of Jubilee purchased 1,300 masks for Richmond City Jail and Richmond Juvenile Detention Center.

During the pandemic, Bon Air youth have been confined to their units. Classes and activities (including Voices of Jubilee gatherings) are temporarily cancelled. With the young men and women in



Voices of Jubilee choir leaders and mentors gather outside of the Bon Air Juvenile Correctional Center before an evening of singing.

their hearts, ministry volunteers delivered 170 care packages, each including a journal, a puzzle book, a pair of socks, and a letter of encouragement from Voices of Jubilee.

The COVID-19 outbreak at Bon Air eventually infected nearly 30 residents, with each placed in medical isolation (solitary confinement for 23 hours each day) for two weeks. Unable to visit, Voices of Jubilee wrote to them and invited others to write. Letters came from friends and children; members of synagogues, mosques, and churches; neighbors and strangers. A new beloved community rose up in compassion. When all had recovered and rejoined the rest of the facility population, Voices of Jubilee delivered pizza.

Vision for the Future

Due to center regulations, only 24 people can gather with Voices of Jubilee at one time. This has created a large waiting list of youth who wish to participate. While in-person gatherings have ceased since March 2020 because of COVID-19, Ramseur and Mejias hope to eventually create additional worship gatherings to accommodate more of the 200-plus youth residing at Bon Air.

They also envision expanding the ministry to include youth at other facilities, such as the Richmond Juvenile Detention Center and Sussex II State Prison.

In addition to support from POJ, the ministry is sponsored by East End Fellowship, River Road Baptist Church, and the Chesterfield Cultural Arts Foundation.

Ramseur and Mejias invite you to support the work of Voices of Jubilee by praying for incarcerated youth, volunteering, or making a financial contribution. Learn how at voicesofjubilee.org.



Voices of Jubilee volunteers Lauren Medina (pictured) and Kelli Powell prepared 170 care packets to send to youth at BAJCC and the Richmond Juvenile Detention Center.

Photography and videography inside Bon Air Juvenile Correctional Center are prohibited, however a 2018 documentary film by The Atlantic provides a snapshot of life at the facility and the youth who are incarcerated there. View it at theatlantic.com/video/index/554468/marquez-jackson.

Grant Beneficiary Empowers Young Men Through Basketball

The presbytery's Self-Development of People Ministry awards grants annually to organizations that work on issues of poverty, injustice, and oppression. For 2019, the ministry chose RVA League for Safer Streets, a crime-intervention program for men living in poverty in the City of Richmond.

The league attracts participants through basketball, an accessible sport that is culturally relevant to the population it serves.

"But the game is just the hook," said Paul Taylor, one of the league's co-founders. "The real reason we are here is to restore humanity to people."

Educational workshops precede games, serving as the ticket of entry to participation. The workshops cover topics relevant and meaningful to players, like parenting, critical thinking, and conflict resolution.

League leaders build relationships with players, serving as mentors, advisors, big brothers, and sometimes even father figures. These relationships are then nurtured through partnerships with other community organizations to connect participants to resources and supports outside of the league.

As many as 200 men participated each quarter before COVID-19 restricted group activities. Since then, the league has developed new ways for players to be involved in improving themselves and their communities.

Food insecurity is a daily challenge for people who live in poverty. Residents of housing projects, where many league players grew up and still live, lack easy access to groceries. They also don't have green space to grow food.

When schools closed, the league volunteered with the Richmond school division to distribute meals to students. League leadership also created vegetable gardens on land loaned to them by a supporter.

Players learn how to tend the plants and why fresh foods, such as immune-boosting garlic, are important to one's health. If a food is unfamiliar to a player, he is encouraged to try it. The gardens' crops are also shared with senior citizens in the community.

Taylor, while amazed at how much the gardens are producing, sees this as one more reason for him and others to invest in this program: "God provides."



Each game begins with a mandatory prayer circle.



Weldon "Prince" Bunn (third from left), Robert Morris, and Paul Taylor lead RVA League for Safer Streets. The trio were recognized at the February 2020 presbytery meeting in Charlottesville. Also pictured are co-pastors of Voices of Jubilee, Ashley Diaz Mejias (far left) and Rev. Lauren Ramseur, who encouraged the league to apply for the grant, and Lamar Lockhart (far right), moderator of SDOP Ministry.

Apply Now for 2020 Grants

SDOP Ministry is accepting applications for 2020 grants through August 31. Eligible organizations may receive up to \$3,000; additional funding may be possible from the national SDOP committee through a separate application process. Grant requirements and the application are available online at presbyteryofthejames.com/sdop.

Learn more about the league's formation and its co-founders in a feature story by the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, available at lisc.org/our-stories/story/rva-justice-league. A video also is available.



The league grows a variety of foods, including kale, beets, beans, and collards.

Continued from page 1

TOGETHER

Worshipping online presents unique opportunities to be together.

In the past, a joint worship service between two churches would have been a big undertaking, requiring one or both congregations to shift locations. Rev. Caitlin Deyerle and Rev. Brint Pratt Keyes, pastors respectively of **Southminster** and **New Covenant** in Chesterfield, realized that they could accomplish this much easier through the internet.

The two congregations held a joint worship with communion on May 3. Some members joined via Zoom and others on Facebook Live, but all heard the Word and shared the Sacrament.

While many long for the return of worship in their sanctuaries and for hugs during the passing of the peace, worshipping online has some perks. Seeing worship leaders up close, for one.

Through the lens of the video camera, everyone has space on the first pew. We are able to see the emotion in a pastor's face and the swiftness of a musician's hands on the organ keys.

Doug Brown, director of music at **Ginter Park Church** (Richmond), has performed mini recitals each week of the pandemic. During the videos, which are available on Facebook, he often shares information about the 1960s-era pipe organ, helping viewers understand how the instrument works.

Another benefit is the ability of members who have moved away to join in worship. Chrissi Guarnieri watched the Easter service at **First Presbyterian** in Charlottesville, which she attended as a child.

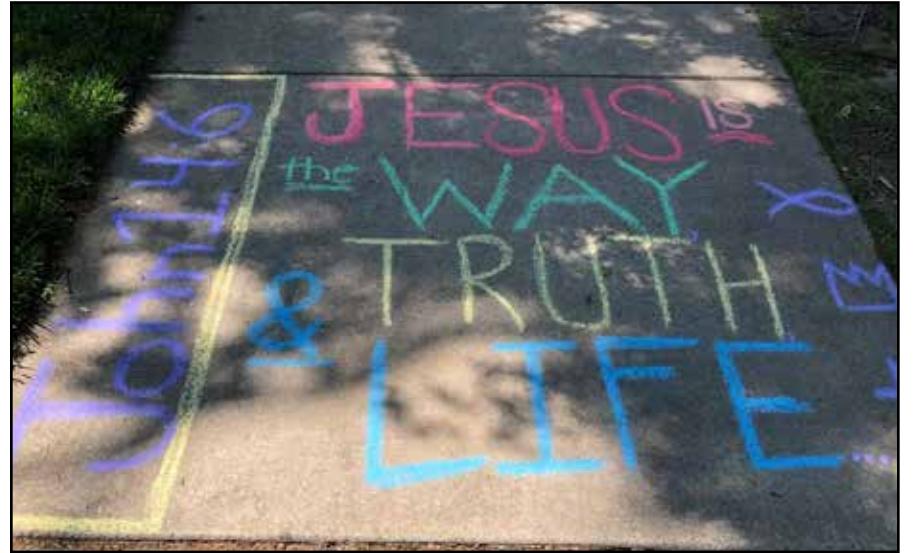
"I loved revisiting my childhood church service all the way from Illinois," she shared on the church's Facebook page.

Use of video media has greatly expanded among churches in our presbytery and nationwide; however, it is one of the many tools on which church leaders and congregation members have relied during this time.

E-mail, phones, radio, and postal mail continue to be useful for connecting, especially when internet availability or experience with



Three Chopt Church (Henrico) began reaching out to their youngest members through short videos posted on their website and Facebook page. The videos feature conversations between Pastor Christopher Tweel and a puppet, Max the church mouse, performed by Tweel's eight-year-old daughter, Amara. Addressing concerns expressed by Amara and other kids in the congregation, each Mornings with Max video shows that big feelings are real and normal, and that God is always with us in times of trouble. Communications director Heather Weiderholt films and edits the videos.



"One of the unexpected stories of this time is the growth of our youth group," shared Rev. Joel Morgan, pastor at **Westminster Church** in Richmond. Weekly youth group meetings, held via Zoom, have had the highest participation in Morgan's 18 years with the church. The youth also joined in a safe, socially-distant activity of decorating the sidewalks around the church with chalk.

technology poses challenges. One church even reported making CDs and DVDs to share with those who do not have computers or smart phones.

Despite a multitude of modern ways to communicate, the loss of face-to-face interaction has been an immense hardship. Seventy percent of church leaders who participated in the COVID-19 survey selected "staying connected with their congregation" as the biggest challenge.

Drive-in Church Helps with Disconnect

The need to see people through more than a computer screen led some churches to think creatively about physical distancing requirements. They found a solution in their parking lots.

Campbell Memorial Church, at the eastern tip of the Northern Neck, met in their parking lot for 12 weeks. Worshipers listened from their cars as Pastor Jim Moseley, along with three other worship leaders, delivered the weekly service from the steps to the sanctuary.

This month, they plan to return to the sanctuary, observing the safety requirements outlined in Virginia's Safer At Home.

"I will miss the unique opportunity that the parking lot service has given us," Moseley shared. "We welcomed neighbors and friends from other congregations who had no such options for worship."

Witnessing churches and ministries at work across our presbytery, however they adapted to this new reality, has been uplifting. We do not know when or if our lives will return to what they were before. Still, we are encouraged by the resilience you demonstrate each day, regardless of the challenge.

Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

1 Corinthians 15:58

Presbyterians Continue to Serve During Challenging Times

The economic impact of COVID-19 has reached nearly every part of our society. While 10 percent of respondents to POJ's survey report congregational giving during the pandemic is up, most say it is the same or down.

To help member churches and ministries serve their communities in these challenging times, POJ Trustees granted each a \$2,000 Inspire Gift. There were no strings attached to the funds; the Trustees asked recipients to use them however they were led by God.

Many recipients spent at least a portion to support operations, including employee salaries. However, churches and partner organizations saw opportunities to aid their communities, either with financial contributions or in-kind gifts and services.

The stories that follow highlight just a few of the ways Presbyterians in our area are serving God through this difficult time.

Donating Food or Meals

Nationwide, job losses caused by the pandemic increased demand at food pantries. Rivermont Church (Chester) gave a portion of their Inspire Gift to the Chesterfield Food Bank; Rennie Memorial shared theirs with the Amelia Food Pantry.

River Road Church in Henrico held two no-contact food drives, collecting nearly 5,000 pounds of food and \$30,000 for FeedMore.

Salisbury in Chesterfield collected food for Central Baptist Church Broken Loaves Food Pantry, clothing for the CCHASM career clothes closet, and cleaning supplies for Home Again.

Supporting Front-Line Workers and Local Businesses

Blackstone Church purchased 75 gift certificates from area restaurants and gave them to employees of their local grocery store. Rosewood Church (Prince George Co.) purchased 100 meals from a local restaurant and delivered them to hospital staff.

Making or Buying Masks for Others

With personal protective equipment in short supply for even medical professionals, crafters pitched in with their sewing machines and 3D printers to create alternatives. Blue Ridge Church



River Road Church held two food drives to benefit FeedMore.



Leslie Bailey of Blue Ridge Church made masks for a hospice organization in her area.



Byrd Church built a ramp for a person whose illness from COVID-19 left her unable to use steps to access her home.

(Ruckersville) Ruling Elder Leslie Bailey began making masks for her family in March. Soon after, Hospice of the Piedmont, a group with whom she volunteers, asked the community for mask donations. Bailey stepped up, sewing more than 200 for the facility's patients and staff.

Providing Comfort or Aid

Gina Maio, a hospital chaplain, used her grant to purchase grief and bereavement counseling materials for families with a loved one in hospice care.

Byrd Church (Goochland) helped a community member infected with COVID-19, which she contracted through her job at a senior care facility. Although recovering, the woman's illness had caused mobility issues which would make accessing her home difficult. In partnership with Goochland Senior Connections and Goochland Rotary, Byrd Church members built a ramp to the home's front door.

Serving the Vulnerable

Westminster Church in Richmond used half of their Inspire Gift to support Into the Neighborhood, an organization that assists people recovering from addiction.

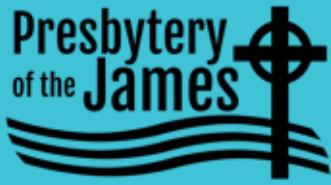
Three Chopt Church added \$3,000 of their own funds to give \$1,250 each to Crossover Ministry, Safe Harbor, FeedMore, and CARITAS.

Staying Connected

Campus minister Alex Fischer used the POJ grant funds to stay in touch with Virginia Commonwealth University students who are no longer on campus. He emailed coffee shop gift cards to students and invited them to meet virtually for a chat.

Supporting Other Churches

First Presbyterian in Richmond returned their Inspire Gift to POJ and directed that it be applied to a new fund the Trustees established. This fund provides additional financial support to churches who have needs that exceed the \$2,000 grant.



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The Vine July 2020

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STEWARDSHIP

Stewardship and the Thriving Church

The remainder of 2020 is going to look different than how we started the year. What we hoped would be temporary has become a transformative shift that will have lingering and lasting effects. There is no going back to the way things were, only the opportunity to faithfully thrive in the future God envisions for us. God reminds us through the prophet Isaiah not to dwell on the past, but to instead look for the new things that God is doing in our midst.

Where are you seeing God at work today? How can you participate in what God is doing? What Stewardship practices are important for the future? To thrive tomorrow, it is vital to have ongoing and fruitful conversations right now to ensure you are addressing all the critical needs and prioritizing your pathway forward appropriately.

Tony Morgan from The Unstuck Group suggests seven shifts to help you begin those conversations.

1 From Analog to Digital

A characteristic of churches that will thrive during and after this crisis is an effective digital delivery strategy that extends beyond online worship into connection and spiritual formation. The best strategies will be those that look beyond simply recreating online what we were offering in person.

2 From Teaching to Equipping

Thriving churches are shifting their focus to equipping people with the tools and resources they need to engage the Bible, practice spiritual disciplines, and live out God's mission in their lives. Teaching becomes a part of the equipping strategy when it inspires clear personal growth along the church's discipleship path.

3 From Gathering to Connecting

Gathering and connecting may sound like the same thing but thriving churches have learned that effectively gathering people for an event does not in and of itself provide a transformative experience. Instead of focusing on how many people gather each week, celebrate how many persons you connect with relationally. God designed us to need one another.

4 From Global to Local

Now is an exceptional opportunity to reevaluate the investment you are making in your own community and to ensure that your attention to global efforts is not diverting your attention from the greater challenge of being missionaries to those near your front door.

5 From Complexity to Simplicity

Thriving churches are becoming more intentional about their mission and vision, and in learning to focus on what is most important. The result is a more effective, efficient, and adaptive ministry. This effort seems counterintuitive, but it works.

6 From Counting Attendees to Engagement

Thriving churches are shifting their measure of effectiveness from counting attendees to focusing on individual movement along the discipleship path. They measure and celebrate each step a person takes along the discipleship path and the impact of the church's ministry in their mission field.

7 From Over-Spending to Generosity

Many churches were spending beyond their current contributions before social distancing began. Now is the time to consider changing how your church is allocating funds. If you can name and measure the outcomes you desire, then you can measure the return on the human and financial investment you are seeing in each ministry of the church. Then discern what changes need to be made to see the greatest impact for the resources you steward.

Take this opportunity to reflect on your current ministry strategies, priorities, and commitments.

Take time to prayerfully realign your ministry funding and spending plans to support how you will be serving your mission field for the remainder of 2020 and beyond.

The opportunity for impact has never been greater. Your best days can still lie ahead of you!

For assistance, contact Deborah Rexrode, associate for Stewardship, at deborah@presbyteryofthejames.org or (434) 996-6032.