**Presbytery Forum – April 8th, 2020**

Stephen opened the meeting with prayer.

1. Jimmy Shelbourne – Interim Associate Westminster- Nancy Leavitt is a member of handbell choir, and she suggested that all churches ring their bells at noon for 5 minutes, so Jim has been passing the word along via various denominational connections – so hoping that at least in Lincoln you will hear church bells because they will be ringing all over the city on Easter Sunday.
2. John Duling – HR part time pastor of visitation and Spiritual Direction at Eastridge PC, Lincoln -Learning technical possibilities that we had not done before this pandemic distancing. We are adjusting. Thomas and Melodie are on the cutting edge of the technology, and we have a tech person who helps do live screen worship on Facebook, and Zoom Bible Study
3. Stephen Earl
4. Martha Atkins – Niobrara – things are going like it is for anyone else. I don’t live stream, but at 6:54 on Easter morning will do a live stream of sunrise with a reading, and will only film the sunrise and only hear the voice of the reading.
5. Tom Osborne – Nebraska City , doing as well as we can, keeping connected via email, facebook and phone calls; Palm Sunday we took Palms to the homes and the kids went out in the yard and waved their palms and posted on Facebook page. Some of our folks are making masks Tom’s is a Husker mask)
6. Douglas Hileman – Fairbury – doing as well as we can be doing. Things seem to be pretty smooth with us at the moment. No big issues.
7. Sue Babovec – HR chair of disaster committee with Suzie; just ordered groceries online, and they will be delivered. Making face masks for friends at the Villa
8. Jane Holtzclaw – Parish Associate at FPC Lincoln; recorded worship, but on Maundy Thursday a live stream Tenebrae; some zoom prayer and bible study groups, sending cards; continue to be a distribution site for Food Pantry – food is pre-packaged and people pick up in parking lot; continue to have AA meetings (4 each week); also doing Zoom communion every week and working out well.
9. Brian Johnson – Norfolk PC; been doing okay; had a funeral also with just a viewing with memorial service later; worship has been offered on Facebook recorded sermons; This week for holy week we will have a musical video from organist and Linda Steele with a sermon and virtual communion.
10. Wendy Wait – Gresham clerk of session and moderator of Presbytery; a drive in service at the community center with a loud speaker
11. Margaret Sprude – Westminster; still trying to get everyone up and on Zoom or some other form so that our session members can meet, using the membership of one of our members, only one or two committees have met because we didn’t have Zoom; Margaret coordinated a parking lot celebration for departing pastor; all the cars had a vacant space between them.
12. Heidi Wallace – FPC Lyons; have been doing worship via zoom on Sunday mornings; this week we’re going to change it up a bit as long as the guidelines remain ten people or fewer, four of my colleagues and I are doing worship together via Facebook live for Holy Week services, and will be on the radio for one service
13. Karen Morritz – First Christian Church in Lincoln, but a Presbyterian pastor; recorded Maundy Thursdsay and Easter meditations yesterday. Live Facebook is too nerve-racking so no live streaming here. Posting on Church’s website and Facebook; sending out a bulletin every week, and a newsletter bi-weekly. two funerals in two weeks = one was during the snowstorm on Friday. Learning new techno skills that I am hoping we will find ways to use beyond this (silver lining in all this)
14. Carl Eskridge – Appreciate what you are all doing in your places of call and work. It is inspiring to hear. What I would offer is advice to take care of yourselves, do what you can and need to to get sunshine and walking or whatever works for you. Recently got an email from the Ross Theatre in Lincoln and you can now watch their videos for $12.00 or $15.00. It is a great escape for two hours. You can watch on your computer.
15. Kathleen Splitt
16. Suzie Harder - Southern Heights Retired Infection Control nurse
17. Owen Derrick – Tekamah FPC – good to hear what you are doing, we are doing video recorded services on Facebook and a link for those who don’t have Facebook. Will be recording Maundy THursday and Good Friday as soon as we finish here; we are doing a zoom conference with the young people; just keeping the connections going. We are ringing the bells across the county, and then invite people in the towns to come out on their porch and we have invited people to do porch prayers during the bell ringing on Easter Sunday. Encouraging the young people to decorate Easter eggs and hang them in trees or outside their home, and will have an auto egg hunt where people can look to see the eggs around town.
18. Dennis Hett – Lincoln, enjoying hearing what other colleagues are doing. One in Vermont is sitting on his porch on Sunday mornings and offering a 5 minutes message
19. Zac Wolfe – Beatrice; we are recording a Maundy Thursday service and have four families in the congregation who are recording parts of the Easter service, and Zac will put them together. They are putting out yard signs for the community that have been purchased, and they will sneak around early on Sunday and surprise people with them. It says “Celebrate Easter – the Presbyterian Church”; trying to stay connected.

Some conversation about face masks, because Sue Babovec was creating some while we talked....

* Sue suggests that a coffee filter folded into the mask gives added protection.
* There is a podcast by the US Surgeon General on how to make a face mask with a t-shirt. Very simple.
* A cloth handkerchief is good also.
* Stephen suggested that each congregation can make their own face masks and we can have a fashion show at Presbytery meeting

**How are folks hanging in with this digital worship services?**

**What kind of feedback?**

**Can it be sustained for several months?**

Jimmy Shelbourne: I got dozens of emails positively responding to his recorded worship services.

John Duling: Eastridge is getting good feedback from Zoom bible studies. We hope we don’t have to keep using this for too much longer.

Martha Atkins:is making phone calls and encouraging members to call each other.

Doug has had a lot of good feedback, but some folks who don’t think he is doing enough because there isn’t a daily message.

Stephen’s mom sent links to their Palm Sunday service and I participated with the congregation I grew up in, and it was wonderful to celebrate Palm Sunday with them.

**Finances:**

Stephen: Presbytery wants to know that we are applying before we apply for an SBA Cares Act loan and/or for Board of Pensions relief from pension payments. They will then approve the loans, and back up th .

The big national banks are doing a poorer job than the smaller banks. Union Bank is helping and already has received the applications for four banks. Smaller banks may be more helpful than the national banks are.

Cheryl can give you the 501c3 paperwork if/when your bank asks for it. All churches are under the 501c3 agreement of the General Assembly/denomination.

Tom Osborne has already filled their application.

Dues relief – Tekamah is applying for it. – be sure presbytery gets a written notification of your application for dues relief. Laurel may apply for it, also.

Beatrice is doing fine financially – they are discussing if they can help some of the small churches, too, with their endowment.

If you don’t need the money, don’t apply for it. Leave it for someone else who may need it.

How are you doing with **self-care**? (pastors and leaders)

John Duling:

* taking walks around the neighborhood;
* pray as you go is an app for spiritual reflection (PAYG)– follows the Catholic lectionary in lectio divina style
* YouVersion also has prayers for each day, though it is a little more theological conservative – has reflections on COVID pandemic and sheltering at home.
* experimenting with Instant pot and enjoying that

Martha:

* that’s a tough question; it has been easier when the days are sunny, the overcast days were becoming very difficult
* self-care – there’s not a lot of it
* our cluster group is not helpful so she doesn’t attend much, because “we don’t do anything meaningful” Martha finds the Lutheran colleagues gatherings more helpful than the Presbyterian cluster

Stephen: How can we help each other to take care of ourselves?

* Suzie – just making a phone call to someone – pastors could call each other to check in and pray with each other – I call my kids who live in other states and I check on them.
* Martha says that the Lutherans have much more camaraderie than with the Presbyterian pastors, so I don’t go because we don’t talk about anything important
* Jimmy – Sue Babovec in her role as COM liaison has been great in this regard and I thank her, and I would hope that other members of COM would do as well as Sue has, and when she calls she prays, and I do feel supported
* Martha agreed with what Jimmy said about Sue
* Jane Holtzclaw would be willing to organize some small group discussion forums
* Tom Osborne has found the local ministerial to be a tight group that is very supportive and we are having zoom meetings. That has been a big help

Stephen asks if any of us are considering taking vacation during this time. Tom Osborne says that many people kind of think we are having a vacation already.

There are folks who are willing to do pulpit supply (recording or whatever) and Stephen is willing also.

Information on doing communion is on both the PCUSA COVID site and the Presbytery COVID resources. J.Herbert Nelson, PCUSA stated clerk, gives guidance and permission, and it is on the Presbytery website, also. There are a lot of resources and guidance on how to do communion. There is an article with David Gambrell from Louisville showing one way to do communion.

Remember we have a special called presbytery meeting on Tuesday, April 14th at 10:00 for the purpose of approving Calvin Crest’s application for SBA loan assistance. We’re figuring this all out. Ray is very busy working on that, for both council and presbytery. If we could find a Zoom guru who could help facilitate these meetings if would be very welcome. Margaret Sprude will ask their member who does it for his business. We need it by Monday, though that isn’t so crucial as the Presbytery meeting

Steven Niles was taken to hospital last night. He was diagnosed with a mini stroke. He is recuperating at home. They don’t think there is any permanent damage, and he seems to be in good spirits. Congregation is going right along and not waiting for him.

Prayer concerns:

Our retired ministers, some of whom are in care centers and they can’t leave.

Sue: the Disaster team has divided all the churches and they are contacting the clerk or the pastor weekly. They are then sharing things they learn with the rest of the committee. They are sending letters to those congregations who don’t have someone in the church to answer the phone.

Stephen is also making calls to all the pastors – 5 last week and 5 this week, so it will take some time, and it has been really meaningful.

Stephen shared that one group is having Zoom happy hour.

Martha closed us in prayer.