

PASTOR'S + CORNER

REV. TRACI SMITH

In the book of Revelation, the last book of the Bible, we read this:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

"See, the home of God is among mortals.
He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples,
and God himself will be with them;
he will wipe every tear from their eyes.
Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more,
for the first things have passed away."
And the one who was seated on the throne said,
"See, I am making all things new."



This is a passage that's often read in funerals and memorial services, a time when we grieve someone who has died and wonder how to place their death in the context of new life. We've had a lot to grieve these past months as our whole lives have been turned upside-down. It's been *months* since we've gathered in the sanctuary and worshipped together. It's a huge, devastating loss. Our community is scattered. We can't hug each other anymore.

In the pages of this newsletter, you'll see some of the exciting things we're working on. I hope you read through them and remember that, though our building is operating in a limited way, the church is very much open. We *never* closed. We *never* stopped worshipping, and praying, and loving one another and caring for one another. But we have lost a lot. We are grieving. These words "See, I am making all things new" ring in my ears as I sit in my office writing to you now. What are you making new, LORD? How are you making our community new? What will we have learned from this experience that we will never forget? How will we be changed?

At the heart of Christian faith is resurrection. Death and loss are not the final answer. New life is born out of the darkest, bleakest, saddest times. I know this is true. May it be true for you as well. Let us be prepared for greater things than we could have ever imagined to rise from the ashes of this challenging time.

Peace to all,

Pastor Traci



CHALK THE WALK



SESSION NEWS

Our Session has been busy this year. In the olden days of January and February, when we didn't know how normal things were, the Ruling Elders elected both a new Clerk of Session and a new Treasurer, set the dates for the celebration of communion for 2020, appointed EPC's first Earth Care team and examined incoming candidates for Ruling Elder and declared them good to go. Then March arrived, with all of the attendant uncertainty of the coronavirus.

Under the leadership of Pastor Traci and without missing a beat, Session began informal check-ins weekly or biweekly by video conference to manage EPC's response to the pandemic, including a host of very difficult decisions made prayerfully and timely. Through the creativity of Pastor Traci and our Session members, our EPC community has stayed engaged in Christ's work and active in worship, fellowship, study, and mission. Our Ruling Elders are currently working with all of our church committees to research and prepare for the eventual reopening of our facility and in-person programs – but only when it is safe for all. Until then, Pastor Traci and Session are constantly working to make our worship and work together meaningful and inclusive.

—Tom Mason

TRUSTEE NEWS

It is hard to believe 10 weeks have passed since we met together in the sanctuary. In that time the Trustees have been busy with some behind-the-scenes projects. The most important task was applying for the SBA Payroll Payment Protection grant which was successful. This grant strengthens our financial position, and we are already completing the paperwork that proves we spent the grant appropriately so it will be forgiven. We discussed the possibilities for in-person meetings and eventual Phase 4 plans for the time when the church will again open its doors for meetings and worship without restriction.

Another couple of projects that have been completed were obtaining a contract with a new landscaper, replacing the sensor light switches with normal ones, keeping the outside drains clear by the education rooms, repairing a pump in the heating system, and opening the Safe Deposit Box at US Bank to locate original corporate paperwork. You may also notice the work done in the children's garden that included painting, weeding, planting, and repairing. The entire property has been given some loving care by a few people, and they could use some additional support when you have time.

While the Session considers where and how worship will be held each week, the Trustees are discussing the need to upgrade the cameras and internet for the building to have more available options. We all miss the personal contact that we enjoyed as our way of life without any anticipation it would end so abruptly. But we are still here, we are the church, and we look to your continued support. Until our next meeting, stay safe and healthy.

—Tom Turek

FAMILY MINISTRY

BY EMILY CULELLA, DIRECTOR OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AND YOUTH MINISTRY

“They have treated the wound of my people carelessly, saying
‘Peace, peace,’ when there is no peace.”

Jeremiah 6:14

The year 2020 will go down in the record books, I'm sure. When I look around, my head spins at how fast the news cycle turns. We shutdown church due to the pandemic in March, the number of COVID deaths swelled to 100,000 in May, and now our country riots against police brutality. If you're like me, you're trying desperately to keep up with your job, homeschool your kids, and figure out trips to the store on a regimented basis. Maybe you feel disheartened and weary. Maybe you feel numb. Maybe you feel irritated all the time.

Intermittently, I have felt all of these things. Sometimes, I'm lying awake wondering about how we'll all emerge from this apocalypse and collapse. Most days, I consider that what we have become accustomed to as normal for many years, will be gone. The church faces some deep questions in this time of crisis, and I wonder how do we address the injury of economic disparity and the formative sin of white supremacy? If anything has been shown to us in this time, it's that both of these iniquities are part of the very fabric of the union we've created in this country. And this crisis of health and protest has exposed them nakedly.

It can be difficult to talk to our children about all of this. As parents, caretakers, godparents, and friends of children we have a hefty job to do—impart a feeling of safety while enabling them to face the uphill battle of the rebuilding of this country. If you have younger children, a small way to start the discussion about dismantling white supremacy in this world is to read them books with protagonists who aren't white. It can be difficult for white people, accustomed to always being centered

in the narrative, to see ourselves as part of a larger network. But our beliefs tell us, over and over, that we belong to each other. When one of us can't breathe, we all can't breathe. Discussions of income disparity go hand-in-hand with books about Civil Rights. While many people quote Dr. King's iconic speeches about racial inequality, there is also a wealth of his writings about income gaps and keeping people poor on purpose. I've attached a link to a website of books for kids about income and race disparities. If you want to see how God thinks of these issues in our country, look no further than the books of Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Amos.

Connect with Us

I'm also hoping to hear from you and your kids. We have a Friday 11 am regular Zoom call for all the kids of church. We are working on some special summer at-distance events, and we are dedicated to figuring out how to remain the body of Christ while being separated from each other! I'm also free to talk to your kids or you about what we can do to equip this generation in this changing time. Let's schedule a time to Facetime each other, Zoom call, or meet at-distance for a chat. Together, we can do the hard work of healing, but only after we acknowledge the deep and sometimes fatal wounds we have inflicted.

Contact me at eculella@gmail.com or text me at 314-497-6651.

Books for Children & Teens:

<https://bit.ly/Children-Teens>

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