



Palma Ceia Messenger

Summer 2021

Our One-Year Journey

From the Pastor's Desk

As we move into the summer of 2021, and I reflect on the more-than 15 months of pandemic journey that we have been through together as a congregation, my heart is full of gratitude for the faithfulness, forbearance, and fortitude of the PCPC congregation.

The journey was, of course, not unique to PCPC, but was one we shared with every faith community around the world. The journey was unexpected and dramatic. Over a weekend, we had to move from meeting in person for over 93 years to suddenly only being able to meet online. And, though it was a shared journey, it was still a very personal journey. And it's the individual experience of the faithfulness of the Palma Ceia Presbyterian Church congregation that I am especially grateful for.

Your generosity and support of the church and its mission of worship, faith formation, youth ministry, and compassionate outreach rolled over from the ancient institution of the offering plate to envelopes sent in through U.S. mail, gifts sent digitally, and gifts carried into the Fellowship Hall literally overnight. Your engagement — showing up online at the worship services, sending in your comments, your notes of encouragement, your reports on how you were doing — these all became a part of the blood that connected the body of Christ at PCPC together in this isolating journey.

I'm especially grateful to Jeanne Rowe and Diane King who, each week, called a list of more than 100 people who were sick at home or unable to access the online worship services or who were particularly vulnerable. Their faithful contact work helped us to stay connected to those who the gospel of Matthew remembers that Jesus called "the least of these," the most vulnerable, and often the most isolated.

I am proud of the members of the staff at PCPC for their determination, their creativity, their energy, and the excellence of their work as they had to find new ways to carry out their mission, to take it online, and to try to make it personal, relevant, and accessible.

I'm also grateful to the administrative and facilities staff who not only had to secure the facility, but institute the new protocols for hygiene and pandemic safety, and had to reposition the church for the way in which it became a receiving point for in-kind gifts of food, clothing, computers, and books for vulnerable people in our community. Amidst difficult circumstances, they have worked hard and have gotten the job done.

PCPC had very little experience with live streaming services or digital services at all before the pandemic began. And, literally almost overnight, under the leadership of our technology team, we came

online, and did so with a commitment to excellence that has been a part of our mission for worship and music for the last 20 years. The congregation has consistently affirmed to me not only their gratitude but also their admiration for the quality of what the tech team did in bringing worship online and into their homes.

The pandemic was especially hard for musicians who had to learn to sing "a new song in a new land." And they had to sing that new song with masks, and sometimes with no one physically present in the room! But from the first Sunday in the pandemic, they brought forward in worship the music of faith, hope, and love.

I was deeply impressed by the efforts of those who work in ministry with children: for their deep, unceasing care for the emotional, physical, and spiritual health of the children and the way in which it drove them to try creative and uncharted ways of connecting with the children in faith formation and nurturing fellowship.

There were a lot of weddings that had to be rescheduled, and a number of funerals that were held only at the graveside. Baptisms had to shift from the middle of worship to family gatherings with the approval of the officers. But over the year, families also adapted, and with understanding and even good cheer. I'm grateful for that witness of their faith and their commitment to the values of the Christian fellowship.

We are not finished yet with the work of battling the pandemic, and we may still have to fight surges and variants. But we clearly are in a better place, and we clearly see and experience hope for a return to our ability to gather, and to do so in healthy and safe ways. There is a lot that the spirit will continue to teach us about our life together through the memories of this journey and the lessons that we've learned from it. But some of the scripture verses from the New Testament that the Spirit keeps bringing to my mind are from Philippians 1:3-5:

I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now.

We can imagine that years from now we'll tell stories about the time that we journeyed through the pandemic as a community of faith. And when we do, I'll be sure to tell the story of the generous and faithful character of the PCPC congregation in the midst of ordeal.

In Christian Love,

Pastor John DeBevoise

Steeple News

Worship at PCPC this Summer

For the months of June and July, we'll continue Sunday worship services at 7:30am, Contemporary Worship at 9am in the Sanctuary, and Traditional Worship at 11am in the Sanctuary. The Vespers service at 6pm will be in the Sanctuary for the summer.

The 7:30am, 9am, and 11am services will continue to be live streamed. You can find them on www.vimeo.com/palmaceiapres, www.palmaceia.org/videos, or on our Facebook Page.

The nursery is open for babies and young children for the 9am and 11am services on Sundays. **Please direct any questions about nursery to Allison Kelly: allison@palmaceia.org**

Children are also welcome to the PRAYground, the designated area where the Children and Families Ministry team offers a focused, quiet, liturgically appropriate and age appropriate activity.

Babies and children are also welcome to be physically present in any of the worship services! Visitors, too!

Covid Protocols

At the June Session meeting, PCPC's Ruling Elders expanded upon their initial authorization in late May after the CDC updated its COVID protocols and approved the following changes for worship and gathering at PCPC:

- Fully vaccinated persons are not required to mask or socially distance themselves at PCPC. Unvaccinated individuals are still required to wear a mask.
- Registration is no longer needed to attend worship services.
- Congregational hymn singing has been restored.
- Some groups, including 12-step groups, are beginning to meet again in person on the PCPC campus.
- Returning to original practices of some elements of worship that had been modified for the pandemic, such as passing the offering plate and the way in which we serve communion.

In support of those who are not yet vaccinated, including children who are not able to be vaccinated and individuals with suppressed immune systems, some due to illnesses, some due to chemotherapy, masks are still available at the entrance to the sanctuary and some sections of the sanctuary are still roped off for those seeking social distancing. Because vaccines are not available for children under the age of 12 as of this writing, masks are still required for unvaccinated children. We hope and pray vaccinations for younger children will be available soon. The nursery is once again open during regular worship services.

Live streaming of the worship services, which has been such a blessing during the pandemic, will continue for all of the regular worship services.

The pastors and staff want to thank the congregation for their helpful forbearance of the necessary steps during the pandemic, and their participation in a way that clearly illustrates care for their friends, neighbors, and community. The officers and pastors will continue to monitor the pandemic situation. If we need to readjust as we go along this journey, we will. We continue to be grateful for the partnership and prayers from the congregation.

If the current trajectory continues, we anticipate in the Fall, as school begins, the return of in-person programs like Followers of the Way, the Wednesday Night Dinner, and in-person Faith Formation classes.

Even as we continue to experience a healthier community, we diligently pray for other communities where the pandemic is still raging and where they do not have adequate access to vaccination.

James 1:2-4 teaches us:

Brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance; and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing.

Bethlehem Inclusive Church Worship:

An inclusive worship service where people of all abilities lead and serve together. Meet in person every other Sunday at 1:00pm.

Locations vary. Follow "Bethlehem Inclusive Church" on Facebook or email zachariasgrant@gmail.com for up-to-date locations.

The service is also accessible via Zoom.

Email zachariasgrant@gmail.com for the link.

Meeting every other week on:

June 20th	July 4th	July 18th
August 1st	August 15th	August 29th

Summer Bible Study

The Rise and Reign of David: A Summer Bible Study on I & II Samuel

Sundays at 10am on Zoom now through August 8

Led by Rev. Will Wellman

Come learn about the beginnings of the kingdom of Israel and the stories of the prophet Samuel, King Saul, and King David. In addition to covering the transition of Israel from a tribal people ruled by judges and prophets to a centralized nation ruled by a monarchy, I & II Samuel captures the continuing presence and love of Yahweh in spite of his people's failures. Will Wellman leads discussion through the books of I & II Samuel, which are the Old Testament lectionary texts for the summer. For more information or to be added to the class email list, email will@palmaceia.org.

Upcoming Events



You are invited to a 4th of July Concert at PCPC!

Featuring Eric Ferring, Tenor; Todd Donovan, Bass; and the Florida Orchestra Brass Quintet

The program, which will be conducted by Music Director Nancy Callahan, will include:

- *The Star-Spangled Banner*
- *Battle Hymn of the Republic*
- *God Bless America*
- Salutes for the branches of the service

The concert is free, and tickets are not necessary.

Concertgoers are invited to share their patriotic spirit by wearing red, white and blue.

Fireworks in the courtyard will follow the concert!

Faith Café: A Feeding Ministry for the Poor in Tampa

PCPC has committed to staff the entire Faith Café on the 2nd Sunday of the month from 4:15 to 7:00 p.m. Volunteers are also needed when there is a 5th Friday in the month, from 10:30 a.m. until 1:30 p.m. To sign up to volunteer, head to www.faithcafetampa.com/volunteer or contact Stann Givens at stann@tampafamilylaw.com.

We guarantee that you will get more out of this service opportunity than you put in! Thank you for your time.

Back to School Blessing Sunday, August 15, 2021

In all morning services August 15th, the pastors will be blessing teachers & students who are heading back to school, and blessing the backpacks that we are collecting during the month of July. Children are invited to bring their backpacks or lunch bags to worship this day for a blessing!

2021 Winter Clothing Drive: August 15 - October 3

We are collecting winter clothes for students at Just Elementary School.

Ages 3-12 need the following items:

- Sweaters
- Sweatshirts (no hoodies)
- Jackets/coats
- Long pants
- Hats
- Gloves
- Belts
- Socks
- School uniforms, pants or shorts- black or khaki, polo shirts - winter green, navy, black, or gold
- Walmart restricted Gift Cards are welcome as school uniforms are sold at Walmart. You can purchase "Alcohol/Tobacco/Firearms/Lottery Prohibited Gift Cards" online or in store.

Donations made by check are accepted. Make check payable to Palma Ceia Presbyterian Church, with "Just Elementary" in the memo.

Drop-off bins are in the Fellowship Hall. Questions? Contact Yvonne Woods at Yzilvetti@hotmail.com or 813-731-6676.

Followers of the Way

Followers of the Way is a Bible Study that has taken place for over a quarter of a century in the Fellowship Hall at Palma Ceia Presbyterian Church. It was started by Bob Jordan, a member and elder at PCPC, who gathered his friends together for study in the Fellowship Hall. The Bible Study has not been limited to members of PCPC, but has been ecumenical, gathering participants from a number of Christian traditions. Until the pandemic, it was held in person on Mondays and always included a prepared lunch. And it always concluded at 1:00 with the Lord's Prayer. The study had primarily focused on the lectionary gospel readings for the Sunday approaching.

During the pandemic, the pastors shifted to leading a discussion of that Bible text on a recorded conversation over Zoom, which was then made available through email and social media to all who wanted to participate in it.

We now anticipate that Followers of the Way will be able to return to its in-person gathering on August 16, 2021. However, because the recorded study has been so popular and has broadened the base of participants, the pastors will continue to make that recording and share it as a part of the resources that we make available for Christian growth and nurture each week.

For more information about Followers of the Way, please contact Fred Frankland (ffrankland1@gmail.com) or John Wells (jdwells01@gmail.com).

As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

-Mark 6:34

YOUTH

Summer Opportunities for Middle Schoolers & High Schoolers include Fellowship Days, Service Days, and Book Studies!

This summer PCPC high schoolers are invited to join in a book study to continue the important conversations on racial justice and faith. The book we will be studying this summer is "Be The Bridge" by Latasha Morrison. This is a 6-week book study that just started on June 14th. It's not too late to jump in! For more information and/or to be added to the participants list, please email ken@palmacea.org or text Kenny at (813) 480-2405.

Fellowship Days will run throughout June and July for both middle and high school students. See the summer calendar for June opportunities, and stay tuned for upcoming July Fellowship Dates!

Middle School Feeding Tampa Bay 1-3:30pm: June 22, July 6, July 20, July 27

High School Feeding Tampa Bay 1-3:30pm: June 18, June 24, July 8, July 22, July 29

High School Book Study 7:30pm on Zoom: June 21, June 28, July 5, July 19, July 26

Hangouts (July Dates TBD!):

June 17 - High School Beach Day at Indian Rocks 10am-1pm

June 22 - Hangout at Hyppo Pops. Middle School 7-8pm, High School 8-9pm

June 27 - High School Hangout at Armature Works 8-9pm



Kate Donaldson is our new youth intern for the next year! If you see her around, make sure to say hello!

Additional information for both June and July can be found at www.palmacea.org/youth

School Supplies Drive Collecting Throughout July



Palma Ceia Presbyterian is collecting backpacks and school supplies for the upcoming school year. These students really need your support! Throughout the month of July, we will be collecting:

- Backpacks (Middle and High School Sizes)
- Washable Markers
- Colored Pencils
- Highlighters
- Pencil Pouches
- Pencils
- Erasers
- Pens (Blue and Black)
- Binders (1", 2", 3')
- Notebooks (Wide and College Rule)
- Composition Books (Wide and College Rule)
- Loose Leaf Paper (Wide and College Rule)
- Index Cards
- Paper Dividers (3-Hole)
- Glue Sticks
- Scissors



Please look for labeled collection bins in the Fellowship Hall and Narthex throughout the month of July.

Supplies will go to students in our FED program and the Beth-El farmworker community.

Questions? Contact Karen Barrera karenfarmerbarrera@gmail.com or 813-928-1603

Prayer for the Summer:

Creator God, we know that for everything there is a season, and we thank you for the gifts of the season of summer. As school terms conclude a year we thank you for the good influence of teachers and the opportunities this community has for education, especially in the pandemic ordeal. Help us to not take those blessings for granted.

We pray for your blessing on long awaited family reunions and the gathering of friends in the summer ahead. Bless homes, protect health, and strengthen love through the fellowship of believers. Where this summer contains times of renewal and rest, a break in hectic scheduling, O God of Sabbath, we give you thanks. Protect those who travel, and keep safe loved ones and friends who may be apart from us in this season. Especially we ask your blessing on the youth and trips this summer, and the leaders of those programs.

Compassionate God, we lift up to you those who suffer in the heat of this season. We pray for those who labor outdoors, and those whose work is made more burdensome by the scorching sun. Please help them with the burden. We pray for the poor, the thirsty, the ill, the grieving, those for whom this season holds no respite. Divine Healer, use us in some way this summer as a means of your mercy.

Lord of Nature, we lift up our prayers for those who suffer now from disaster, or who may be in the path of storms this hurricane season. Reveal the power of your love to help and to heal in the midst of catastrophe.

To everything there is a season Lord, and a time for every matter under heaven. We lift up the private prayers we are carrying into the season ahead, names and situations that need your help, and we add our own names as well. We pray in the name of the one who retreated to the mountains to pray, and who taught by the sea, Jesus Christ. Amen