
Branches

Alexandria First Presbyterian Church

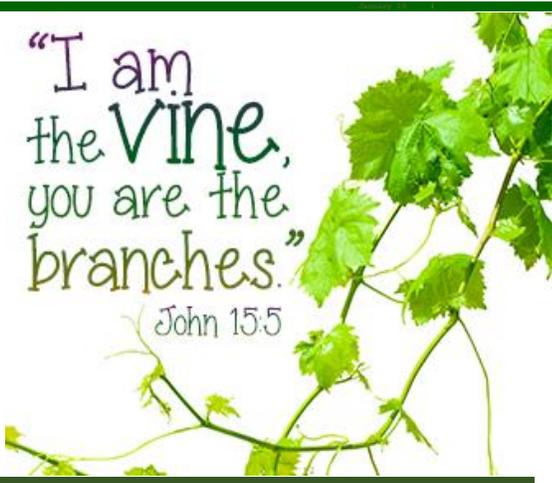
“I am the vine, you are the branches.”

June 2020

141 Little York-Mount Pleasant Road - Milford, New Jersey 08848

Facebook: Alexandria First Presbyterian Church of Mount Pleasant

908-996-4333 churchoffice@alexpres.org www.alexpres.org



“I am
the vine,
you are the
branches.”

John 15:5

A Note from Nick

Dear Friends,

I continue to hope that everyone is healthy and making out ok during this period of sheltering at home and self-quarantining. Like most of you, when I first heard about the coronavirus, I never imagined it would mean changing the way that we worship and live out our lives of faith . . . but it has. We have found a new way to worship, and while it may not be the same as being together in the sanctuary . . . we are still uniting our hearts together as we worship our living Lord. And yes, we had to get creative with mission and Bible studies and evangelism . . . but we are finding new ways to be connected and do the work of God together. For as I've said many times, the church is not the building . . . the church is the people . . . and as the people of God we continue to “be” the church!

When we will be able to get back together again in our sanctuary remains a difficult question. First we need guidance from the State as to when and how we can gather in-person in our sanctuary. Then we will need to consider how we can safely accomplish in-person worship together. And the bottom line is that worshipping together again in the sanctuary will probably look very different. I know when all this began I had this dream of joyfully coming back and worshipping together again. I dreamed it would be a packed sanctuary and we would all be embracing and rejoicing. But I've since come to grips with the fact that it won't look like that. We will probably have to wear masks, and be spaced out in the pews. There will be no hugging or hand shaking. We may even have to consider two services, or overflow seating in fellowship hall to maintain social distancing. So to help us better understand where you are with these new ideas, and gauge your willingness to come back to worship again the Session asks you to please fill out the survey that was emailed to you (or mailed to you).

In the meantime, as we wait for guidance from the governor, and as we continue to “be” the church together in new ways, I would ask that you please pray for the Session. They have difficult decisions to make and will need your support and your prayers.

Together we will get through this! As we celebrated Pentecost this past Sunday I was reminded of the mysterious and amazing ways that we are connected to Christ and to each other through the Spirit! Worship in our sanctuary may be cancelled right now . . . but the church is open . . . we are open for the Spirit to blow through us and use us to accomplish the reconciling work of grace and love . . . as the hymn says, “*Spirit, spirit of gentleness, blow through the wilderness calling and free . . . Spirit, spirit of restlessness, stir me from placidness, wind on the sea.*”

In Christ,

Pastor Nick

Tending the Flock

How to Reach Rev. Nick Hatch

- Through the church office Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. 908-996-4333
- By the church's website on the "contact us" link: www.alexpres.org
- Via his email: nhatch@alexpres.org

Join Us in Worship

Join us for an online worship experience each Sunday at 10 a.m. by accessing our website or Facebook. This Sunday's service, and several of the most recent are also available 24/7.

Our Ministry Teams

Building and Property: Craig Bender (E), Jim Hansen (E)

Christian Education: Mary Goldman (E), Laurie Gregory (D), Cyndi McDowall (E)

Evangelism/Membership: Lois Bondor (E), Karen Pardonner (D), Sharon Solomon (D)

Mission Interpretation: Stacy Butz (D), Howard Thomas (E)

Nominating: LuAnn Keefe (E), Cyndi McDowall (E)

Personnel: Joan Carroll (E), Helen Jones (D), Flora Nielsen (E)

Stewardship and Finance: Pat Keefe (D), Steve Pardonner (E), Robin Vogel (E)

Worship and Music: LuAnn Keefe (E), Flora Nielsen (E), Tammy Sassaman (D)

(E: Elder, D: Deacon)

Baptisms

Baptism is the visible sign of an invisible event: the reconciliation of people to God. We rejoice with those who are celebrating their baptism anniversary this month. It was in June that Kaylee Gunderman, Jackson Davis Koeller, Cole Kenneth Kramer, Victoria Grace Kramer, Emma Mae Meyer, Riley Jean Meyer, Scott Robert Campbell Meyer, Brayden Marshall Schneider, Timothy K. Unkert, and Ryan Unkert were baptized. Congratulations and blessings upon being a child of God!

Sympathy

It is with great sadness that we have learned of the passing of Jean Lecome Altino on March 31, 2020. Jean is the father of Nerva Altino, our former Director of Music Ministry. Nerva and his brother Robenson are dear friends of our church and we send to them and their families our most sincere condolences.

Christian Response to Racism

In the fall we began a conversation about racism and our Christian response. As recent heartbreaking events have indicated, that conversation is still very much needed. So we will be continuing the conversation on June 14 at 11a.m. via a Zoom meeting. To help guide our conversation we will be reading the article *Ten Myths White People Believe about Racism* by Carolyn Helsel:

<https://www.christiancentury.org/article/critical-essay/ten-myths-white-people-believe-about-racism?fbclid=IwAR0rT2pTJyd-92qjD5LRbqZISdk5rPXqo2hENJKINJePm5u-20QuDFNmu8E>

If you would like a paper copy of the article please contact the church office. A Zoom invitation will be sent out prior to the 14th for those that are interested.



Ministry Appreciation Sunday
June 7, 2020

**Be sure to join us online for
worship this Sunday**

**Our ministry teams will highlight
their year in ministry**

**It's sure to be a
memorable day and we
look forward to having
you be a part of it!**



June Birthdays

2	Ryan Unkert	9	Howard Jones	13	Cathy Rosswaag	20	Gino Vastola
5	Chris Andreychak	10	Janet Silliman	14	Julie Lyon	22	Heather Pardonner
	Jack Skibinski	11	Jim Bush	18	Luke Bender	30	Troy Stagg
	Rebecca Sutton	12	Shannon Fritsche		Dave Heinbach		
6	Michael Folmar	13	Ryan Doyle	20	Robin Schostkewitz		

Worth Mentioning Again

The items below have been discussed in our *Bi-Weekly Wrap* but are worth mentioning again in case you missed them . . .

Amazon Smiles: Don't forget to register your Amazon online purchases to Alexandria Church. The program donates .5% of your eligible purchases to the church at no additional cost to you. Please talk with Marie Knapp with questions.



Camp Johnsonburg: We regret to let you know that Camp Johnsonburg has suspended its summer camp experience. This was done in an effort to keep staff and campers safe during the Covid-19 pandemic. Please check their Facebook for updates as we move towards summer.

Feed-back: If you have been participating in the life of our church via our online worship, virtual communion, Zoom fellowship time or other means to stay connected, let us know your thoughts by calling or emailing the church office. We'd love to know what you think.

Food Pantry: The need is greater than ever before. Donated items (canned goods only during this time, please) are appreciated and may be left at the church door.

Mid-Week Message: Pastor Nick continues to offer his thoughts and encouragement during his check-in on Wednesdays. Look for them on our Facebook or website's home page.

Prayer Requests: Please send your prayer requests to Pastor Nick before the Thursday preceding Sunday's worship so they can be lifted up during our Joys and Concerns.

Scripture Reader: Would you like to serve as an online scripture reader for one of our worship services? Your reading will be recorded remotely from any place you feel comfortable: your home, our sanctuary, outside, and so on. Please email Pastor Nick or call the church office to learn more.

Survey: Many decisions need to be made before we can gather together in person for worship. Your Session will make sure worship will be a safe and meaningful experience when the time comes to re-open our building. An email survey was sent last week. Paper copies of the survey were postal mailed to those without electronic abilities. Please return your survey by June 8, 2020.

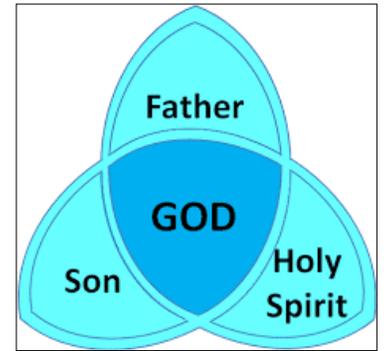
Tithes and Offerings: Church expenses continue even through our facility is closed. Please send your gifts to the church via postal check or online donation through our website. We are grateful for your contribution.

Trinity Sunday

June 7, 2020

On Trinity Sunday we proclaim the mystery of our faith in the triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, One-in-Three and Three-in-One. Unlike other festivals in the church's liturgical calendar, Trinity Sunday centers on a *doctrine* of the church, rather than an *event*. It celebrates the triune God as the basis of all we are and do as Christians. The triune God is the basis of all our prayers—we pray *to* God the Father, *through* Jesus Christ, *by* the Holy Spirit. The Trinity holds central place in our faith.

In celebrating Trinity Sunday, remember that every Lord's Day is consecrated to the triune God. On the first day of the week, God began creation. On the first day of the week, God raised Jesus from the grave. On the first day of the week, the Holy Spirit descended on the newly born church. Every Sunday is special. Every Sunday is a day of the Holy Trinity.



Summer Mission Trip

We must regrettable inform you that the youth summer mission trip has been postponed. We look forward to sending our youth off next year on a mission of love and hope. Until then we will be praying for our youth to be blessed and to be a blessing.



High School Class of 2020

Let us join together as a church family to share in the joy and celebration of our high school seniors: Kyle Kunich, Brandon Schuetz, and Isabella Stagg. May God bless them as they continue on their journey.

Caring Hands Crafters

Caring Hands Crafters are continuing to work on our handmade caps for patients at St. Luke's hospital and students participating in the "Hat Not Hate" anti-bullying program. Our mission bulletin board, near the choir room, is starting to "bloom" with more lovingly made creations. Please keep creating and praying!

We miss you all.

Blessings,

Alice Hansen and Pati Tiedeman



Christian Education News and Updates

It is with great regret—in the interest for the well-being of our staff, community, teachers, and students—that we must cancel this summer’s Vacation Bible School program. We look forward to hosting this much-loved event at AFPC next year.

Summer Sunday school, youth fellowships, and in-person Bible studies continue to be suspended at this time due to the current health crisis.

The CE team looks forward to providing all of these again in the future and will send an email out to our families when they all resume.

During this down time of social distancing though, please think and pray about how you may want to be involved in this team in years to come as a Sunday school teacher, helper, or a nursery care provider.

The CE team could always use more helpers and ideas!

Until we are able to meet again, the CE team leaders wish all of you safety and good health!



Items for Branches

The deadline for the July/August issue of Branches is June 30. It will be a combined issue for the summer months.

If you’d like to get word out about your upcoming ministries and programs for the fall, this would be the issue to target!! You can email your information to the church office at churchoffice@alexpres.org or simply call and leave a message.



Presbyterian Church USA News

The Five Forgotten Books of the Bible

In the Jewish tradition, the five books known as the Five Scrolls, have been elevated to the status of festival scrolls and are read on a major Jewish holiday. But in the Christian tradition, they have been all but forgotten, according to Dr. Bobby Williamson. These five books enriched the life and imagination of our Jewish siblings, but for most of us they have withered away,” he said. “What might happen if we reclaim these texts and take them seriously as Christian texts? Let each book speak its own claim on the truth,” he said. “Let’s take each one seriously.”



Song of Songs

Many people describe this book as allegory—God’s love for Israel or Jesus’ love for the church. “But if you read it, you know that’s not really what it’s about. It’s erotic love poetry, taking human sexuality seriously, an amazing part of what it means to be human. The author is not interested in objectifying people as sexual objects. Waiting for permission is a wonderful thing to be found in a biblical text.”

Ruth

This book speaks today to the nation’s response to immigrants. Many scholars believe it was written during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, when the answer to the immigration question was that foreign women are terrible, and we ought to send them away. It is a story of a Moabite woman who figures out a way to integrate, and later learns she is the great-grandmother of King David. Israel never would have been great in the first place had it not been for this Moabite woman. The book invites us to think about how we create outsiders.

Lamentations

This book speaks today to communities and individuals who have been traumatized. It’s written from the perspective of people who remain in the land and are trying to make sense of trauma and recover from it. Lamentations features four separate voices who speak their own truth, making no effort to reconcile the different perspectives. One voice, known as Daughter Zion, says this, “I might have done some things wrong, and I might deserve punishment — but not this. Shame on you, God!” Another voice, has this rejoinder: “Lean your cheek to the smiter, take your licks — and maybe tomorrow God will be faithful again.”

Esther

Esther is a quiet, meticulous, and brilliant a queen who works every protocol and ultimately saves her people. As for today, Esther poses this dilemma for us: do we protest, or do we legislate? Esther suggests we need both of those, and maybe more: consider, “This moment requires me to do something. What can I do?”

Ecclesiastes

The author known as Qoheleth translates as “the Preacher” or “the Teacher.” Throughout the book, Qoheleth calls life “pointless” and “vanity of vanities.” “No matter what you do,” Qoheleth tells readers, “it will be as if you never were.” He doesn’t give us much to hang onto. We don’t understand what God is doing, so there’s no way to please God. But the author’s message is you’ve got to take whatever comes to you, because there’s no way of predicting it.

“Spend some time with these biblical books,” Williamson says. “They are rich, rich, rich. They have something to say about what it means to be a human being living in a world like ours.”

Mike Ferguson / Presbyterian News Service



Father's Day Blessing

June 21, 2020

The Lord bless you and keep you;

The Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you;

The lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.



Clothing Drive Update

I'm guessing you have lots of time these days to clean out your closets and drawers. Wondering what to do with that top that looked great in the store but you never wore, or things that the kids have outgrown overnight?

We will slowly but surely be able to continue our clothing drive fundraiser for the youth group mission trip. Yes, mission trips will resume one day, so let's help them be financially prepared for this wonderful service.

Consignment shops will open again, one way or another. *We Kids of Flemington* has opened by appointment only. Anything that is not sold at a consignment shop will be donated to the *North Hunterdon Thrift Shop* and *Trenton Rescue Mission*.

Items accepted are men's, women's and children's clothing; boots, shoes, and sneakers; belts; accessories; and outerwear.

You can also donate children's books!

I am happy to coordinate individual contactless drop-offs at church or my house, whichever is easiest for you. I can also arrange pick-ups if you'd like to leave things outside. Please call or text me to set up a time. 908-797-2941.

Karen Pardonner

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The Adventures of Flat Jesus

“And remember, I am with you always.” - Matthew 28:20

Summer is about to begin, and even though we may be stuck at home, we need to remember that Jesus is with us!

So take Flat Jesus with you . . . even if it’s just to the backyard, or the park, or on a walk in your neighborhood.

Wherever you go this summer, near or far, take Jesus with you!

Email your pictures to Pastor Nick (nhatch@alexpres.org) or post them to the church’s Facebook page.

Together let’s remember that we are connected to each other and to Jesus this summer!

Our Vision

Gathered in God’s grace and led by the Holy Spirit,
Alexandria First Presbyterian Church
 joyfully worships,
 prayerfully seeks,
 and gratefully shares
 as a loving family growing in Jesus Christ.

A Summertime Prayer

As the sun rises, Lord, let your light shine on me:
 the warmth of your Presence;
 the brightness of your love;
 the radiance of your joy;
 the shining of your hope.

Let your light shine on me—
 as the sun rises, Lord, let your light shine on me.



Reminder!

Please remember to send in your responses to the online or paper survey before this Monday. It’s important that we hear from you. Thanks so much!