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## Message from the Parsonage Couch

Dear SOV Friends and Family,

First of all, I want to offer a big THANK YOU!! Thank you for your generosity, the gift cards and food you have dropped off for the food bank. Thank you for the money you have given to the discretionary fund that makes it possible for us to help our struggling community. Thank you for the trout, the bread, the masks, the puzzles, the flowers and the notes you have dropped off at the parsonage. And thank you so much for going way out of your comfort zone and gather together on Zoom for worship on Sunday morning. I know how challenging it has been, but the fact that you have been willing to try something new so that we can be together speaks the wonderful faith community you are.

I want to speak to what is going to happen in the future. On Monday night your Administrative Council got together to reflect on where we are now and talk about the future. Our church leadership has agreed that we will follow the guidelines set by the Governor and the reality is that even when she begins to slowly lift the social restrictions it is likely that it will be a while before large gatherings such churches are able to open. There is good reason for this. It would only take one of us to be unknowingly infected and we could infect the whole community and even cost lives. Unfortunately, this means we will likely have to continue to Zoom worship for a while. When the governor extends the numbers of people who can gather our church leadership will develop plans that get us back together in person as soon as it is safely possible. I know it is frustrating not to have more specific plans but we are all at the mercy of how the

### Shepherd of the Valley United Methodist Church Vision Statement

We are Shepherd of the Valley United Methodist Church, a multi-generational Christ community seeking to sing God's spirit into the world by inviting all, serving all, loving all.

Shepherd of the Valley United Methodist Church  
604 Seven Mile Road, Hope, RI 0283  
Hope, RI 02831

Worship and Church School  
Sunday, 9:30 a.m.

Office Hours: Monday - Thursday, 9:00-12:00

Phone: 821-8217 • Fax: 826-7787 • E-mail: [office@sovumc.org](mailto:office@sovumc.org) • Web site: [sovumc.org](http://sovumc.org)

Rev. Katherine Mitchell

virus acts for a while longer.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge that one of the hardest things for many of us to deal with is the feeling of being out of control. I will be honest I, myself, have been dealing with feelings of helpless frustration with so much of what is going on around us. Today I have to meet with a family who has lost their beloved mother and grandmother. Rather than holding on to one another and caring for each other in their grief, they are only allowed to have five people at the funeral. Then they will have to go back to their separate homes and continue keeping distance from each other in the midst of their grief. It's horrible! I have no doubt each one of us can tell a story of loss and sacrifice they have had to make.

This virus is having a profound impact on the way we live our lives and there is very little you or I can do, other than to stay apart and keep each other safe. And while we know this intellectually, we can still have times when we struggle with our emotional reactions to the loss of control. Those emotions can come out in different ways from weepiness to anger and every way in between. It is important to know that this is all normal and you are not alone in feeling this way. We all need to find healthy ways to cope with those feelings, whether that is exercise, doing something creative, watching a Disney sing along on TV or chocolate.

You are welcome to reach out to me or someone else in our church family to talk through phone or Zoom. You can use our Zoom Room to meet with your families or host a gathering of friends. I know it can be hard to let go of the feelings that get in our way. Try taking a deep breath, say a prayer and tap in to God's creative loving force for the strength to find a way to cope. Most of all remember you are loved and we will get through this together.

Be Blessed, Be a Blessing,  
PK

*The Circuit Rider will continue as an online publication for now. Please submit anything for the summer edition by May 17<sup>th</sup>.*

## Being Together

In this time of social distancing, all upcoming church meetings and gatherings will be held via Zoom. The meeting link is <https://zoom.us/j/857952035?pwd=NUdSaUpqRD BKWGo2LzZqcWJVUWlodz09>. Meeting ID is 857 952 035 and the numbers to call in are: 253-215-8782 or 301-715-8512. This Zoom "room" is also available to church members who do not have a Zoom account and want to connect with other members, family, or friends. Please check with the Pastor Katherine or the church office to be sure nothing else is scheduled.

- **Sunday Worship**—Sunday worship will continue to be held via Zoom. Pre-worship gathering starts at 9:30, worship starts at 10:00 a.m. The order of service will be emailed in advance.
- **Zoom Lunch**—Are you working from home or just at home and need a way to connect with other humans? Join us for Zoom Lunch Monday-Fridays from 12:00 noon to 1:00 p.m.
- **Women in Spiritual Harmony**—Wednesdays from 9:30 to 11:00 a.m.
- **Wisdom Wednesdays**—For the next couple of weeks we will be listening to a round table of a rabbi, a priest and an evangelical pastor talk about the internet series "The Chosen" that we just finished watching. You can watch the series by downloading the app The Chosen on your phone or tablet or go to <https://studios.vidangel.com/the-chosen>. We loved the series and deepened our relationship with Jesus Christ. It's a must see! We are meeting at 6:30 p.m. and all welcome!
- **Kids' Connection**—Kids can connect with PK and each other via Zoom on Thursdays at 6:30.
- **Men's Breakfast**—This group will meet via Zoom at 6:00 a.m. on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, and 29<sup>th</sup>.
- **Parents' Night**—Attention all parents! We will be having Parents' Night In using Zoom every other Friday starting at 8:30! The dates are May 1st, May 15th and May 29th. Hope to see you there and I will send out reminders the week of!

--Lisa Marciniak

## Finances and Giving

### Finance Update

As of the end of March, Shepherd of the Valley's financial results were better than the budget. Revenues for the church were \$55,000 versus a budget of \$52,000. Expenses through March 31, 2020 were \$52,000 compared to a budget of \$56,000. Thus, net income through the first three months is positive at \$3,000 versus a budgeted loss of \$4,000. Revenues are higher than expected due to better-than-anticipated general giving to the church and generous giving toward the church's fuel bills. Expenses are less than budget due principally to lower than expected utility costs, particularly electricity for the church.

We, of course, are concerned about the impact of the absence of in-person Sunday services. To the extent that you can in these difficult times, please keep up with your typical giving to Shepherd of the Valley. The important work of the church continues and with your on-going support we will continue to make a difference in our lives and those of others, both spiritually and physically.

### Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT)

EFT provides a safe and secure way to have your giving deducted from your checking account on a regular basis. If you would like to use EFT, please contact the church office. Also contact the office if you would like to increase your regular gift during this time, or need to decrease it.

### Online and Mobile Giving

If you would like to make a one-time gift electronically, please consider using our on-line giving option. Go to <https://www.sovumc.org/give-now>. You can also do this on your smartphone. Download the free "GivePlus Church" app from the Apple Store or Google Play, find SOV, and make your donation using your credit/debit card or checking/savings account. You can also create an account and set up recurring donations.

### Stewardship Note

Although our building remains closed, the work of the church and our missions goes on, in some ways, more importantly than ever. The majority of our church's expenses are not impacted by the fact that we're worshipping online, and we have made the commitment to continue paying salaries (the bulk of our expenses) for as long as we financially can.

We are grateful to those who use Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) as that ensures that your gifts are received even without your physical presences. For those of you who don't, you can certainly add this option (see note in this section). You also have the opportunity to give electronically through Vanco's eGiving tools. You can give through our website (to <https://www.sovumc.org/give-now> [sovumc.org/give-now](https://www.sovumc.org/give-now)) or using Vanco's mobile app (see instructions in this section).

If you prefer not to use EFT or give electronically, please mail your gifts to us: Shepherd of the Valley UMC, 604 Seven Mile Road, Hope, RI 02831. The mail is being picked up and deposits made.

We do recognize that financial situations have changed for some of you—know that we appreciate everything you have and can do for us.

### Stimulus Checks

Some of you may have received stimulus money from the government. For some, this is a lifeline and will provide much-needed relief. For others who may be in a more income-secure situation and/or with lower expenses because you're staying at home and not making discretionary purchases, this may not be needed money at this point. We would ask that you consider giving this back. Shepherd of the Valley is one option we'd like you to seriously consider, but you can also consider other local options.

## Caring and Sharing

### Shepherd's Pantry

Demand on our food pantry is even greater. We need all the basics—cereal, tuna, pasta, mac & cheese, soup, vegetables, and pasta sauce. Healthier food options, including gluten-free and lower sodium/fat free items, are always needed along with computer paper and similar sized boxes—they are perfect for our food pickups. You can drop your donations off under the overhang at the entrance to the Hope Room. Someone is at the church regularly to collect and distribute your offerings. Cash or grocery gift cards are also welcome.

### Magazines Needed

Please save your old magazines. AJ, one of our church children, relieves stress by tearing magazines and needs more given the increased tension of these times. Please drop your magazines off outside the Hope Room door (where the food pantry bins are located). We will be sure to get them to AJ.

### Shut-Ins

We have a number of shut-ins who could use a phone call, card, note, or delivery. Contact Pastor Katherine or the church office if you can help.

### Social Media

Social media sites, such as Facebook, are becoming an invaluable way to connect with others during this time of self-isolation and social distancing. The church has a Facebook page, and PK invites you to “friend” her on Facebook. To join (even if only during the current situation), go to [www.facebook.com/r.php](http://www.facebook.com/r.php), input the appropriate information, and click “Sign Up.” Use the “Search” function at the top, type in PK (or anyone else you’d like to “friend”), and click “Add Friend.”

### Save Your Pop-Tabs!

All those beverages you’re consuming while you’re at home?? Save those pop-tabs. Bring them to church once we’re back together and put them in the box in the kitchen. These tabs go

toward helping with food, supplies, and utilities for the Ronald McDonald House in Providence.

## Church Council Minutes April 1, 2020

Church Council members present via Zoom included Barbara Walz, John Lombardo, Lisa Marciniak, Sandy Knapp, Donna Faria, Sue Dyl, Jay O’Connor, Howard Gay, Jerry Crosby, Tom Senerchia, Loxi Ellingwood, and Meg Davis. Also present were Pastor Katherine Mitchell and congregational members Rob and Marti Bower.

Sandy opened the meeting via Zoom at 5:10 p.m. by reading a poem.

John noted that we have access to the Payroll Protection Program, which allows small businesses to apply for a loan to cover payroll. If staffing is retained, the loan is converted to a grant. There is no downside for us to apply. The motion was made, seconded, and unanimously approved to authorize treasurer Martha Ahern to apply for the loan. The Conference also has programs we can explore for financial assistance. John acknowledged Martha’s work in gathering the data needed to apply for the loan as soon as it opens up on April 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Katherine reviewed the Holy Week plans. Despite the efforts of Tom to implement “Drive In” church and have it approved by Governor Raimondo, the Conference will not accept any liability should anyone become ill with Covid-19. Katherine will therefore be doing the Holy Week services vis Zoom. Palms will be available near the Hope Room for Palm Sunday, and Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services will be offered at 7:00 p.m. Rob suggested locating videos of past cantatas and showing them during the week.

Katherine also reported that the Zoom lunches are continuing, Soup and Soul will continue after Easter until the series (“The Chosen”) is finished, and she will be Zooming with the kids on Thursday. She will look at her vacation time and

what coverage is needed. Everything is still a go as far as the June moves.

Tom has reached out to Pastor Effie regarding her moving expenses but has not heard anything. Katherine noted that hers will be around \$3300.

John reviewed our finances. Our January and February numbers are the strongest two months we've had at the start of the year in a while. The budget is a break-even, with a substantial gift in January included. Actuals are \$10,000 ahead, including revenues that are about \$8,000 ahead (higher giving than expected, building use, and a substantial fuel fund gift). Expenses are \$2,000 lower than expected, primarily due to utilities. We have only paid the pastoral support portion of mission shares.

The picture looking ahead is less clear. We have about 40 families who use EFT, though some may need to adjust their gifts due to changed financial situations. John will ask Pam for a report of EFT giving. Some non-EFT givers are sending checks; Katherine deposited about \$3200 today in gifts that have come in since our last service. Our payroll is about \$1750 per week, including Social Security, and we are intending to continue paying our staff as long as possible. We do have cash reserves to cover expenses and the pastoral move. Katherine also received a substantial check toward

the Pastor's Discretionary Fund. Donna will check with Open Table to see if help is needed there.

Katherine also reported on her experiences of the day visiting Walmart and Stop and Shop wearing her clerical collar, and how eager people were for prayers and support.

Concerns were raised about moving of pastors during these uncertain times. We will write a letter to the bishop regarding these concerns and the importance of continuing existing pastoral relationships even if life is returning to normal in June.

Jerry reported that work is at a standstill on the parsonage. The kitchen cabinets are being made, but few contractors want to do inside work.

We thanked Tom for his ministry. Katherine noted that the \$150 she paid for our Zoom membership has been well worth it for our ministry.

Meeting was adjourned at 5:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Hannah Bell-Lombardo

## **Prayer for the Time of Coronavirus**

Dear God,

It seems like lots of uncertainty around us.

So many people who need prayers.

Today, I pray...

For those whose health is compromised by the coronavirus or other health issues.

For those who suffer from the economic impact of the virus, in travel, manufacturing, hospitality, energy or so many other industries.

For healthcare workers and first responders, and other public servants who put themselves in harm's way for us.

For our leaders of the world, our countries, states, and cities, as they seek to help manage this challenge

God, it can be overwhelming. But you tell us over and over again not to be afraid.

Show me how to trust in you.

As I examine my heart this Lenten season, help me to turn away from my concern with self, and turn my heart, hands, and prayers toward the concerns of others.

In the name of Jesus Christ, I pray.

Amen