

Updates –



It has now been six weeks since we last met together for worship. I want to take time in this space to share with you a few updates about how things are going and what is going to happen next.

I want to begin with a few words of appreciation. Given the extraordinary efforts of Erin Halpin, Amanda Kemp, and Sara Snyder, we have been able to continue our worship services every Sunday and broadcast them via Facebook and YouTube. I cannot tell you how grateful I am to each of them for the contributions they have made to allow us to maintain something close to “normal” in our worship services.

Currently, we are under a stay-at-home order per Jackson County officials through May 15. As I write this article, the Governor of Missouri is announcing that churches may reopen as of May 4, but **the earliest day we might gather for worship again is May 17**. At this point, we will continue to listen to the Jackson County Health Department and follow their guidelines. We will announce to you when we will again have public services, Bible Studies, small groups and the rest of our events once we are confident that it is permissible and responsible to do so. Even as other businesses and churches begin to open, **please do not assume we are open until we announce an opening**.

Once we do open, we will continue to follow health guidelines, including encouraging social distancing, providing hand-sanitizer (as it is available), and reducing physical contact (handshaking, hugs, etc.). **I want to encourage you to only come to worship when you feel it is safe for you to do so**. Just because we are offering public services does not mean you need to come until you are ready.

We are planning on continuing to offer our services over the Internet either live or recorded (we are still working on the details). This will continue to provide an option for participating in worship even if you are unable to attend physically. In addition to this, these videos of the services are an easy way to share with others what is going on and inviting people to worship in another way.

I’ve been asked about **the financial health of the church** and how we are faring during this time. I am pleased to report that despite not having met for 6 weeks, our offerings are only off about 10% from this point last year. Due to the continued generosity of our congregation, **we have been able to meet every financial obligation this year**, including our apportionment payments.

I do have one piece of bad news to report – on the evening of April 17 the mail was stolen out of our mailbox. We know of at least three checks that were part of that theft. If you sent a check to the church which might have arrived on April 17, please contact Anita McWhirt (ramcwhirt@comcast.net) so she can confirm we have received your check. We have replaced our mailbox with a locking mailbox to prevent this from happening again in the future.

Lastly, I had a very nice conversation with Pastor Tom the other day. He and his wife Jennifer are looking forward to beginning their time here. He is excited about getting back into the local church after his time in the Navy as a chaplain. He asked lots of questions wanting to get a better understanding of this church and our community. I encourage you to continue to hold Pastor Tom and Jennifer in your prayers for their upcoming transition.

It is a pleasure to be your pastor as we, together navigate our way through a very unfamiliar time. I look forward to the day we are able to worship together again.

Blessings,

Chris

Confession of the Pastor's Wife: Taking the Long Way Round

I will make the blind walk a road they don't know, and I will guide them in paths they don't know. But I will make darkness before them into light and rough places into level ground. These things I will do; I won't abandon them. Isaiah 42:16 (CEB)

Growing up, our family enjoyed taking long drives through the countryside. Sounds strange, I know, but when you're poor and have basic cable, it's either that or C-Span most Saturday afternoons. We drove to see the buds bursting forth in their flowery glory each spring. We drove to experience the wonder of the phoenix song that is fall in the Midwest, as the leaves burst into fiery shades of color before falling from the trees. We drove to see the water pour forth from Truman Dam, as the Corps of Engineers opened the floodgates after summer rains. One winter, as we were driving home from my grandparent's house in the Ozark, we saw the after-effects of an ice storm, and I marveled at the crystalline world outside.

Our long drives were not relegated just to weekend entertainment. My parents worked hard to avoid the major highways and Interstates on any road trip. "You don't see anything on the Interstate!" was the refrain I heard time and time again. And so, we drove through the countryside on two-lane state highways and out-of-the-way county roads, stopping at every roadside attraction and mom and pop gas station along the way. While the teenage me would roll my eyes every time my dad pointed out some long-forgotten obscure Civil War signpost, the adult me understands that my being took shape along the curves and hills of those two-lane roads.

My dad was a storyteller. And, as we drove miles and miles to see trees bud or sample cheese curds at Osceola Cheese, he shared stories with us about his childhood. He weaved these epic tales about mischief he and his friends got into, about Sunday dinners at his Grandma Polly's, family camping trips on the James River, long summer days spent on his Uncle Paul's farm. There were stories about growing up in Kansas City...buying chips out of the back door of Bryant's barbecue, watching a baseball game at Municipal Stadium, working at his parent's diner, playing baseball for East High School. On those drives, I learned who I was, where I had come from, and the spirit of all of the people who lived within me.

We talked about other things too, faith, politics, dreams and goals. The time in the car opened up something between us. Our drives were a sacred space in which we laughed, teased, debated, and even argued our way through a myriad of topics. There was freedom as we drove, freedom to just be. I remember one summer drive down a two-lane country highway in the Ozarks, windows down, my dad's favorite Janis Joplin tape blaring from the cassette player, the station wagon winding its way to my grandparent's house while we sang "Me and Bobby McGee" over and over again.

My friends, I think we're taking the long way round right now. Like the people in Isaiah, we are blind and walking down a road we don't know. Our lives have diminished to this one time, this one place. We can't think about tomorrow, because tomorrow seems too unreal. We're at the start of a tall incline—in the middle of a sharp curve. But, as I learned from our family drives, there is so much to be gained from taking the long way. If we commit, truly commit, to this road we are on right now, what might we learn? What insights about ourselves might we come to? What new understandings of God might we experience? How might God work within us to bring us closer to him, and to help us become more the person he designed us to be and less who we think we should be? How might our families and communities be changed if we embrace this road God is leading us down...if we allow him to direct us each day to the work he wants us to do?

The world is living in darkness now, but God will bring it light. And we have a part to play in that process. We are the light-bringers! We are a lamp that is lit with the love and grace of Jesus Christ. His Spirit works within us to keep our light burning, even in the darkness. It's our job during this time of fear and tragedy to shine on! But, we can't do that if we're not connected to the source of our light. Now, more than ever, we need to connect to God through Scripture, through prayer, through individual and corporate (online) worship. We need to give God the wheel as we drive along this road, and we need to listen to Him as he tells us who we are, where we came from, and what plans he has for our future. Because there is a future, both here on Earth and in God's great Kingdom. Like all roads, there is a destination to which we are headed. We'll get there, but let's commit to showing up better than we were before.

This week, let's commit to taking the long way round. Let's embrace the journey, and open ourselves to listening for God's direction. Here's a final verse to take with you today. As always...I pray for you blessings and peace.

Sara

2 CORINTHIANS 4:8-9

*We are experiencing all kinds of trouble,
but we aren't crushed. We are confused,
but we aren't depressed. We are
harassed, but we aren't abandoned. We
are knocked down, but we aren't knocked
out.*

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Canva



Jim Arr	Michael Hatfield
Roy Ball	Tara Leath
Les Case	Leticia and son Ethan
Donald Cohan	Derek Petty
Dorothy Conn	Steve Raymond
Wade Davis	Nancy Rowe
Chad Elmer	Larry Sparks
Janet Ford	Ray Trowbridge
Richard Fuerst	Elaine West
Winnie Fuerst	Wilma Williams
Harvey Geary	Pastor Tom & wife Jennifer

Congregation de Mellier
Heart and Soul Children's
Learning Center
All Ministries
of the Church

April/May 2020

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
19 Services 10:00 Online	20	21	22	23	24	25
26 Services 10:00 Online	27	28	29	30	1	2
3 Services 10:00 Online	4	5	6	7	8	9
10 Services 10:00 Online	11	12	13	14	15	16