

May 2020  
Volume 33.5

## St. John's United Church of Christ

*St. John's United Church of Christ is a diverse community forming a united congregation, seeking to grow our faith, share it with others, and serve God's people wherever the need is present. We are living God's love and all are invited!!!*

### **An Open and Affirming Congregation**

503 Stuart Circle  
Richmond, Virginia  
23220

**Telephone:  
804.358.9291**

**Email:**  
office@stjohnsrichmond.org



### **Web Site:**



stjohnsrichmond.org

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# The Messenger



## A Message from the Council President

2 Chronicles 20:12

“Oh our God, will you not execute judgement upon them? For we are powerless against this great multitude coming against us. ***We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.***”

### ***Psalms 46 (in part)***

“God is our refuge and strength,  
a very present help in trouble.  
2 Therefore ***we will not fear***, though the earth should change,  
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;  
3 though its waters roar and foam,  
though the mountains tremble with its tumult.”

(bold italics mine)

How the world has changed in 90 days!

In January we were anticipating a joyful re-opening of our beautiful sanctuary by maybe Easter, but definitely by Pentecost. Repairs to the building were proceeding apace and making good headway. The contractor had given us a possible expectation time for the new chillers' arrival and installation. Then by February as a nation we were focused on trying to understand just how bad this pandemic might get. By March we were sheltering in place in Virginia and today, as I write this on April 25, 2020, 53,418 citizens of the U.S. have died.

I'm scared. I think lots of people are. Every time I cough or sneeze I think “Oh NOOOO” even though I have been obeying the guidelines: staying home, washing hands, and wearing a mask when I go out.

*Continued*

# A Message from the Council President

*Continued*

As followers of God, we have been here before. Whether it's bombs falling, gas and food being rationed, or diseases ravishing our community, we have been here before. As a nation and as Christians we have been here before. The Chronicles and Psalms scriptures I referenced above were both written about the same time, around 850 BCE. Jehoshaphat was king of Israel about 200 years after Solomon when the enemies of Moab, Ammon, and Edom came against Israel. One of the largest armies of the known world was nearly camped outside their walls. And the people were scared. Jehoshaphat cried out in the temple "God, we do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you." God responded (in 2 Chronicles 20:15) "Do not fear or be dismayed at this great multitude; for the battle is not yours but God's." Wow, what a relief, we don't have to fight this alone.

Psalm 46 is a declaration of where our eyes need to be and what we can believe -- that though the mountains shake and though the mountains tremble we should not fear. God has promised to be with us through the darkest days, and God reminds us to "fear not."

It's scary right now, for our nation, for our city, for our loved ones and ourselves. Now, uncertainty for the future of our church community has joined those fears.

It is not a coincidence that this season of spring, when we celebrate the emergence of warmth and new life after the cold of winter, -overlaps with the season of Easter, when we celebrate the promise of life after death through Christ's resurrection. No matter how scary it is, God's got this, if we keep our eyes on God as Jehoshaphat declared. And while the future may be uncertain, and our lives may be remarkably different when we come to the end of this particular part of the journey, I think of the old hymn "God's eyes are on the sparrow, and I know God watches me."

Praise God indeed!

Peace be with us all.

Dreama

# Announcements

## **May Mission of the Month: Health Brigade**

In this challenging time, Health Brigade continues their mission of providing healthcare, mental health and health outreach to those least served and/or most oppressed in our community. They remain committed to serving people with few resources and we know that the number of people who will need their services is increasing during this pandemic. As more people face the loss of health insurance due to job loss, they will be able to turn to Health Brigade. Please support this very important nonprofit with a check mailed to St. John's, or you can donate online at <https://bit.ly/stjohnsdonations>.

## **Pastoral Transition**

As many of you know, this month Pastor Linda Higgins resigned, and it was with deep regret that the Church Council accepted her resignation. We thank her for her service to St. John's and to the Richmond-area community and wish her well in her future endeavors.

We have contacted the Central Atlantic Conference of the UCC to initiate the process of selecting an interim Pastor. In the meantime, members and friends of the church will be preaching and conducting the Sunday online services, and you may contact Rev. Beverly Lindsey, at (804) 275-7165, with any personal issues or pastoral concerns. If you would like to serve as a liturgist for a Sunday service, please contact Beverly Lindsey at [revbevlindey@gmail.com](mailto:revbevlindey@gmail.com) or (804) 275-7165 to sign up for a date. If you have any questions or concerns about Pastor Linda's resignation or the search for an interim Pastor, please feel free to contact any members of the Church Council -- David Agee at (516) 425-7006, Marcie Agee at (516) 425-0465, Betsy Bighinatti at (804) 502-1007, Jeff Jacobs at (202) 361-9887, Daniel Martin at (423) 284-6641, Scott Siefert at (804) 350-0826, Dreama Terrill at (804) 297-6705, and Laura Totty at (804) 380-5620.

## **Do you need food?**

As our opportunities for getting out of our homes are curtailed, some of us are turning to cooking activities, and some of us may be in need of additional food. If you are having trouble getting to the store, or know someone who is, or would like to have some freshly-made food delivered, please contact Scott Siefert at [sesiefert@gmail.com](mailto:sesiefert@gmail.com) or (804) 350-0826. Likewise, if you are able to be "on-call" to respond to a need for food, also please let Scott know.

## **Financial Update**

Many thanks to all who have mailed in their pledged offerings or who have donated online. While Sunday services in the church building are suspended due to the public health emergency, St. John's continues to provide online worship and must keep paying its bills. During this time, PLEASE do what you can to maintain your financial support for ongoing church activities. Checks can be mailed to the church at 503 Stuart Circle, Richmond, VA 23220. Your bank probably offers free online bill paying services that can be used for your St. John's donation. And you can donate online for your pledge or to support church missions through the St. John's website by going to <https://bit.ly/stjohnsdonations>. As a reminder, May's Mission of the Month is Health Brigade, formerly the Fan Free Clinic, which offers health care services to the less fortunate in the RVA community. It is Virginia's oldest free health clinic, celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. If you have any questions about online giving or church finances, please contact Stewardship Chair Jeff Jacobs at [jwjacobs9@gmail.com](mailto:jwjacobs9@gmail.com) or (202) 361-9887.

## **The Passing of Rev. Henry "Hank" Harman**

The Rev. Dr. Henry "Hank" Harman, retired Ordained Minister in the Potomac Association and former St. John's UCC pastor, passed away Monday, April, 20, 2020. Arrangements will be made at a later date. Condolences can be sent to his family at:

Jane Harman  
7241 Garland Avenue  
Takoma Park, MD 20912

# Announcements

## **Renovations Update**

During the past month, the church Trustees and Renovations Committee have been (safely) overseeing a number of improvements to the church. When we return to the church building, you will see that 16 diagonal parking spaces have been marked and reserved for church use along the alley, with 24 more spaces reserved inside the new apartment building. The elevator has been upgraded, with a new, easier-to-operate exterior door opening to the sidewalk along the alley. A new chairlift has been installed on the stairs leading from the back parking area doorway to the Parlor. Work on replacing the heating and cooling system for the sanctuary and fellowship hall is well underway. And bids are being solicited to replace the yellowed coverings over the stained glass windows and to upgrade the restrooms throughout the building. If you have any questions about the renovations or would like to offer suggestions for redecorating the Parlor or other spaces, please contact Rob Osborn, Jeff Hetzer, Jeff Jacobs, Betsy Bighinatti or Richard Bighinatti.

## **Guest Preachers in May**

During the month of May, St. John's has an exciting lineup of guest preachers joining us for our Sunday virtual worship.

### **Sunday, May 3rd**

Rev Dr Valerie Carter Smith will be joining us this week and giving the sermon. She is the Executive Director of the Women's Missionary Union of Virginia. She received her Masters of Divinity Degree at Virginia Union and her Doctorate in Ministry from the Baptist Theological Seminary in Richmond.

### **Sunday, May 10th**

Jeff Jacobs is in his 11th year at St. John's, after moving to Richmond from DC with his now-husband, a Richmond native. Jeff currently serves on Church Council and several Council committees, the Endowment Board, and is a church Trustee. He will be bringing us a special Mother's Day service and reflection.

### **Sunday, May 17th**

Lindsey is a Member in Discernment with the United Church of Christ, and has been part of the St. John's church family since moving to Richmond in 2018. She currently serves as Associate Pastor for Development at Richmond Hill, an ecumenical Christian community and monastery in Church Hill, and chairs the UCC Potomac Association Justice & Witness Committee. She lives in the Fan and loves being outside, swimming in the James River, and exploring the city.

### **Sunday, May 24th**

Philip Adams is a final level student at Union Presbyterian Seminary. He expects to graduate with a dual degree – Masters of Divinity and a Masters in Christian Education. He received his Bachelor's degree in Religion and Psychology at Carson-Newman University in Jefferson City, TN. He is the father of six and has seven grandchildren. Philip is an active member at Richmond Metropolitan Community Church.

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## **Annual Meeting - May 31st after Church**

The church's annual congregational meeting will be held after church on Sunday, May 31st. Because of the public health emergency, it will be held by Zoom immediately after the Sunday worship service. Items on the agenda will include the election of leaders for Church Council, the church Endowment Board, and church Trustees, and information about the slate of nominees will be circulated at least two weeks before the meeting. If you have any questions, or would like to have any items added to the agenda, please contact Council President Dreama Terrill at (804) 297-6705.

## **Potomac Association Spring Meeting - June 6th**

SAVE THE DATE

Potomac Association  
Spring Meeting  
Saturday; June 6, 2020  
10:00 am

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WE WILL BE MEETING  
VIRTUALLY  
VIA ZOOM CONFERENCE CALL  
WITH AUDIO AND VIDEO CAPABILITIES.

STAY TUNED FOR FURTHER INFORMATION



## **Wednesday Night Bible Study Fellowship: The Gospel of Matthew**

Our Bible Study will focus on the Gospel of Matthew. We will be meeting every Wednesday from 6:30 to 7:30 through Zoom. It is the featured Gospel this year in the Revised Common Lectionary and is considered one of the most important and influential books in the Bible. It tells the story of Jesus' birth, life, and death, and resurrection. It is the "teaching" gospel as it addresses some of the most foundational Christian themes including righteousness, justice, and forgiveness. We are starting with Chapter 1 and will progress through the book. All are invited to attend. If you have any questions please contact Scott Siefert at 804.350.0826 or email him at [sesiefert@gmail.com](mailto:sesiefert@gmail.com).

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8446524667>

Meeting ID: 844 652 4667

Or telephone +1 301 715 8592

We welcome anyone dialing in on the phone who wants to be recognized to introduce themselves since we can only see phone numbers on the screen.



# May 2019

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat			
					1	2			
3 Worship via Zoom 10 a.m.	4 Church Council Meeting 6:30 p.m.	5 Renovations Committee Meeting 3 p.m.	6 Bible Study via Zoom 6:30 p.m.	<p><b>Sunday Worship</b> While church is closed to limit the spread of COVID-19, we will be gathering for worship remotely using Zoom.</p> <p>The platform will be open at 9:45 a.m. so that people can log on and be ready when the service starts at 10 a.m. We welcome anyone dialing in on the phone who wants to be recognized to introduce themselves since we can only see phone numbers on the screen.</p> <p>Join Zoom Meeting  <a href="https://zoom.us/j/487361412">https://zoom.us/j/487361412</a>            Dial in by telephone: +1 (312) 626-6799            Meeting ID: 487 361 412</p>					
10 Worship via Zoom 10 a.m. <i>Mother's Day &amp; May Birthdays Celebration</i>	11 Church Council Meeting 6:30 p.m.	12 Renovations Committee Meeting 3 p.m.	13 Bible Study via Zoom 6:30 p.m.						
17 Worship via Zoom 10 a.m.	18	19 Renovations Committee Meeting 3 p.m.	20 Bible Study via Zoom 6:30 p.m.				21	22	23
24 Worship via Zoom 10 a.m.	25	26 Renovations Committee Meeting 3 p.m.	27 Bible Study via Zoom 6:30 p.m.				28	29	30

31  
Worship via Zoom  
10 a.m.  
**Church Annual Meeting after worship**

- 10 Cameron Higgins
- 12 Charlie Weaver
- 15 Trey Lyle
- 17 David Agee
- 22 Henry Martin
- 24 Travis Schaefer
- 26 Emily Pittman
- 28 Don Stiegler
- 29 Elisabeth Burnette
- 29 Beth Stiegler
- 30 Jennifer Martin



**May birthdays will be celebrated after worship on Mother's Day, Sunday, May 10th.**