

CONNECTIONS

HE IS
risen

April 2020

THE PASTOR'S DESK

Our Vision:

To glorify God
through loving
Him and serving
others

Our Mission

Statement:

A Faith Family
helping to make
and develop
mature disciples

Just last week someone asked me if I had taken a class in seminary that taught me how to pastor a church through a pandemic. I responded with two words: "Not yet." I'm hopeful that this season will come and go much quicker than many are saying, but I feel confident in saying that this season will leave a lasting impact on society. It will for many years affect our perspectives and our behaviors. Seminaries may begin to incorporate a class or segment on how to pastor a church through a health crisis. Businesses will likely develop contingency plans that will help them weather another pandemic. School systems will likely be more prepared for such an event in the future. This season that we are encountering will undoubtedly continue to shape our futures for many generations.

Unfortunately, we are all still in the "reactive" stage of this pandemic. As each day comes and new situations develop we respond as best as we can; but, because we have no way of anticipating what is coming we tend to become impatient and frustrated. This impatience and frustration can quickly lead to behavior that is not reflective of Christ. We may take our frustrations out on loved ones or neighbors. We may be impatient with the cashier at the grocery store or with our boss who is also walking through uncharted territory. While we know that this is not the best way to respond to this situation, I can't help but wonder if we know what *is* right and appropriate. What is the appropriate response for the Christian who is growing impatient and who is frustrated with this season?

There are certainly many good words we can use to answer this question and several that have made their way through social media in recent days. There is however, one word that I've not seen posted which I believe is of utmost importance in this time: grace. During this season of impatience and frustration Christ followers must choose daily to wrap ourselves in the grace of Christ Jesus. We need to extend grace to one another and to ourselves. During this season, it is especially important to remember 2 Corinthians 12:9 where Christ says to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (NIV).

If this pandemic has reminded us of anything, it has reminded us of our own weakness. We are certainly not as strong or immune as we thought we were. But the power of Jesus is most evident in our weakness. His grace is sufficient in every season of life; and now, we must, as the Body of Christ, willingly extend that same grace to one another. Know that my prayers are with you daily. Know that I miss you terribly. Know that I am greatly anticipating the day we are able to once again meet together as a faith community to lift up songs of praise, to lift up prayers, and to read God's Word together. *You are loved!*

Press on!
Carson

Church News

FINANCIALS

as of March 31, 2020

Actual Expenses YTD \$87,233

Actual Received YTD \$104,109

Deacon of the Month

Clay Smith

706-825-6244

Happy Anniversary

- 04-05 Liza & Jeremy Davis
- 04-06 Julie & Danny Henslee
- 04-10 Sheila & Raymond Fulcher
- 04-18 Grier & Jordan Whitaker
- 04-30 Lynda & Julian Adams, Jr.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

- 04-01 Valerie Allen
- 04-02 Raymond Fulcher
- 04-02 Leslie Arnold
- 04-03 Yong Cha Clark
- 04-05 Jim Laughery
- 04-07 Quentin Weber
- 04-09 Kirsten Sawyer
- 04-11 Rosie Cook
- 04-11 Alan Hall
- 04-11 Travis Liming
- 04-11 Sonja Soloman
- 04-12 Paige Fleming
- 04-13 Summer Laughery
- 04-14 Cheyenne Wellborn
- 04-15 Steve Camp
- 04-19 Becky Windham
- 04-21 Caleb Sawyer
- 04-24 Dianne Mundy
- 04-26 Bryce Williamson
- 04-27 Katy Arrowood
- 04-27 Carson Britt
- 04-28 Kolton Wellborn

YOUTH:

Distant, but not absent. That's the goal, right?

For the foreseeable future, it is our goal to maintain a "social distance" – a safe bubble of space – away from each other but without being completely absent from each other's lives. As we have found out over the past two weeks, that can be tricky! But as a church family, surely we can rejoice in the fact that the current age we live in offers us so many ways to accomplish this task. FaceTime, Skype, Zoom, Facebook Live, Instagram Live, Online Church... all have been used since the COVID-19 outbreak to stay in touch with each other, to spiritually encourage each other, and to keep faith alive in a strange time. All these different modes of communication through social media – they have been re-purposed to advance the Father's will and give glory to our great God. And as a reminder, His greatness has not been eclipsed by anything... not even a virus. God is still on His throne.

I will be honest with you – I am not the most technologically savvy fella. And sometimes I can be hesitant to embrace new technology. I'm a creature of habit and routine – so I can be a little resistant to learning with new technological tools. But for the next few weeks, we all would be wise to lean into the social and spiritual benefits technology can offer us.

That said, the biggest way I will be maintaining a social presence with all Harlem Baptist families is through our weekly "HBC Family Fun at Home" challenges that will be posted on Facebook. Each Monday, I will upload/share a video on the church's home Facebook page that will give details on the new weekly challenge. I want each of you to participate in the challenge, and share your picture or video on your page and "tag" your submission with #HBCFamilyFun so we can all see our submissions together. At the end of the week, the staff will choose the 3 best submissions which will receive some cool prizes! This past week was our first time trying out this type of activity and it seemed to have been pretty successful. I look forward to the fun we will have together in the coming weeks with our #HBCFamilyFun challenges, and I look forward to seeing you all again in person soon! Be encouraged!

"Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called – one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." Ephesians 4:2-6
-Evan

Music Ministry:

In the midst of the challenges of our lives right now, there is so much comfort to be found in the Scriptures. So many verses we have each memorized to help us face the struggles, fears, and needs for each day. But as I have been recalling to mind favorite verses of comfort and provision, I am reminded that context is always key.

For example, in Philippians 4, there is great comfort in reading that, "My God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus." What a blessing! But we cannot view verses individually without knowing what is going on around them. Paul makes this statement after thanking and encouraging the Philippian church for their *generosity*! Yes, God will supply your needs, Paul says, often as a response to generosity and sacrificial giving to others. God will provide – but our care and giving to others is a catalyst for God's exponential provision and blessing.

In 2 Corinthians, we see almost the reverse effect take place. "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God (1:3-4)." Here, God first comforts us, in order to show us how to comfort others when they are hurting in a similar way. The blessings and grace received from God are explicitly not meant to be hoarded but shared and given away to others, so that God may once again fill us when we have need.

Our God is the God who multiplies, who feeds 5,000+ with five loaves and two fish, who never fails to provide or comfort as we need, if we only ask. But He also encourages and expects us to sow into others in their time of need, to give generously as He has given to us, and to trust Him to provide even when giving requires sacrifice. During this time of fear and need, sow into others. Sow mercy and grace into your family. Sow blessings into the church and its members, be it financial or otherwise. And sow time into everyone around you, because God has blessed you with it to share. *This is my prayer in the harvest, when favor and providence flow. I know I am filled to be emptied again – the seed I receive, I will sow.*
-Rebekah