



Pastor's Ponderings

Not only has the COVID 19 virus stopped us from gathering in person to worship, it has stopped the progress we were making in moving toward becoming a more beautifully diverse congregation. Each time that I have come to the office, I have stopped to look at the bulletin board and reflected on who we are and the congregation that we may be developing.

During my time as transitional pastor, we have focused on senior ministry and fallen short. Then we spent more than a year negotiating a shared pastor relationship only to have the potential partner congregation withdraw at the last minute.

Then, we were blessed with new members. Our new members brought us to the point where we may declare ourselves to be a multicultural congregation. We invited the president of the New International Seminary to visit with students from Africa. I began thinking that we may be able to focus on developing exciting new possibilities in cooperation with the seminary.

Then, the virus came, and we had to shelter in place.

I think of the early church. It was an all too brief period of amazing inclusion of diverse people forming faith communities in this fledgling Christian movement. Its growing prominence led to the co-opting of this fast-growing movement by the Roman Empire, when Constantine found it politically advantageous to become a Christian. This was the beginning of the domestication of the followers of Jesus. The early became the church of the elite, and cultural and class differences took a toll on congregational diversity.

I still feel that we may be able to revive the model of the early church and keep open to all. I will never forget the response that Margaret Jameson had when I first arrived and asked about the congregation's outreach to the community. She said, "we believe that it is our job to welcome and love anyone that God sends through our doors."

God has sent people. We have welcomed and loved our newest members.

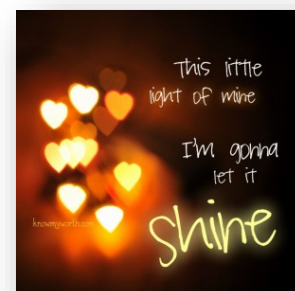
I believe that we must be racially and culturally diverse in order to be faithful. Racial and ethnic diversity in the United States has introduced dramatic tensions within faith communities. Decades ago, Life Magazine identified 11 AM on Sunday to be the most segregated hour in America. It is now made so painfully clear that the 21st century must be the century of multiracial, multicultural congregations.

I believe we are among the ones who can do our part to make it happen. We can dismantle the prejudices and unconscious biases that segregate houses of worship and become communities of hope and reconciliation. We come to this task with our own stories, having traveled on our own respective journeys of risking and learning, dealing with challenges and celebrating victories. Along the way, this congregation has lived a roller coaster of highs and lows and faced the joys and complexities of ministry.

Wednesday night at 9 PM Joyce and I participated in the 9- and one-half minute demonstration of shining our flashlights heavenward. I remembered the Sunday when I put links to "This Little Light of Mine" into our worship service.

[The Little Light of Mine](#) and [This Little Light of Mine](#)

My prayer is that First Presbyterian Church of Corona may come out of the current crises and be a light that continues to shine even more brightly and faithfully.



שְׁלוֹמִים

Shalom: A Study of the Biblical Concept of Peace begins

Thursday, June 11 at 10:30 AM on Zoom and continues every Thursday through August 27

Shalom shines biblical light on the issues and unsettled mood of our times. Today, more than ever, we cry out for shalom. See what the Bible says. We will use materials written by Old Testament scholar Donald E. Gowan and attempt to unravel the multiple biblical threads of this eternal quest in this masterful exploration of the Hebrew concept "shalom" and the Greek "Eirene." Peacemaking is a central concern of the church and the world today.

Topics include:

- What Do We Mean When We Say "Peace"? What They Meant by Shalom in Israel
- Wholeness, Health and Harmony: God's Intention God of Peace & God of War
 - Division, Illness & Conflict: The World as We Know It
- Good News from God! Christ Brings Peace with God to the Believer
 - Christ Brings Peace with God to the Church
- Blessed are the Peacemakers - Part I Blessed are the Peacemakers - Part II
 - Christians as Peacemakers
- Hope for Peace, Part I: Peace for Israel Hope for Peace, Part II: Peace on Earth
 - What Good are Promises? The Importance of Hoping for Shalom.

In order to participate:

- Download the free Zoom app onto your computer
- Email or phone Pastor Henry at jlandhjdg@msn.com or 626 805 7472
- Instructions and materials will be sent to you via email

Dear members and friends of the First Presbyterian Church of Corona:

After watching the news and reading articles on the internet for the last two days, I fear that many religious leaders just don't get it. Your Session gets it and has determined that we shall not gather at the church building until it is safe. This virus can move quickly to affect personal and communal health. Thus, I feel compelled to send you this letter.

Some Christian leaders are mounting aggressive campaigns and even filing lawsuits against state government officials claiming that a ban on religious gatherings is a violation of the free exercise clause in the First Amendment and trying to promote the idea that we are being persecuted and victimized as Christian people.

Our Constitutional rights are very important to me, and the Constitution is centrally important to all citizens. Peter Marty, editor of the Christian Century magazine reminded me that the Constitution doesn't require me to give food to the hungry or shelter for the homeless. There is no amendment that forces me to listen to science, or consider the needs of the medically vulnerable, or attend to the aspirations of the elderly. I appreciate my rights. But fixating on those rights at the expense of the love, compassion, and mercy contained in the substance of faith is wrong. Faith is more essential than a lot of things right now, perhaps especially these lawsuits that claim moral high ground for religious freedom.

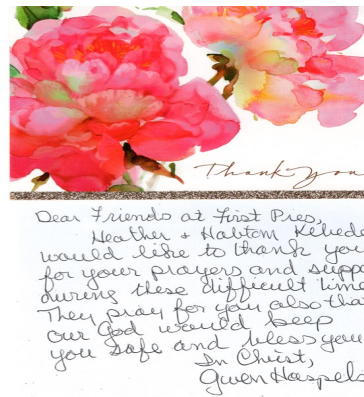
We have chosen to follow Jesus' commandment to care for our neighbor, especially our most vulnerable neighbors (Matthew 22: 37-40), during the coronavirus/COVID19 pandemic. While we are not gathering at the church building, we have chosen to see this as a time for us to try new ways to worship, learn, pray, and stay connected ...after all, *God is always doing new things (Isaiah 43:1-19)!*

Pastor Henry



A note of thanks!

More than a year ago, session voted to begin spending some of our mission dollars to support the work of Habtom and Heather Kebede in Ethiopia. Heather is the daughter of John and Gwen Haspels and the granddaughter of Les and Joyce Haspels who longtime church members would remember. Gwen has written a note of thanks for our love and support. We've also included the latest newsletter from Habtom and Heather.



KEBEDE- HIGHLAND ECHOES

THE ANTIOCH PARTNERS

hhkebede@gmail.com

theantiochpartners.org



Mask Practice



Dear Friends, Family and Partners

Land Grabbing

There have been some days this month that I thought we were living in the old west. Land grabbing has been an issue as of late. The green area in front of our house is just one place that people are trying to take by behind-the-back payments and intimidation. They even put a tin fence around most of the green area and around the tree our kids had been playing in. The man doing this also has been bringing groups around to intimidate the community. They are not armed- just lots of young men. So, our community has been uniting to fight this in a just and legal way. We hired lawyers and also have got a court order that no construction can take place until the issue is finalized. We do ask for continued prayer that justice would prevail and light would shine into the darkness. You way ask, "Why is the green area so important?" Well to us there are a few reasons. One, a place for kids in the community to play. We have 128 families in this community. Two we believe it is a unifying place. If fixed up we can organize community events and game days. Three, we believe that God wants us to use the land to reach out to low income youth and young people in the community and surrounding communities. Lastly, God always in to redeeming and leading people to himself. We believe this land has the possibility to be a land that is used to redeem people for Christ.

The good about this land problem is that it has given us a good opportunity to get to know many of our neighbors. Habtom has also developed good relationships with the housing committee for our community. They value his advice. Many times, Habtom has been able to help take people to offices with our van and give godly and timely wisdom. God is so good to use this struggle to unify our community and also help us get to know our community and stand with them to fight righteously for justice. We praise God for this opportunity to be His light and His prayer warriors. "For such a time as this."



Family

Well this month has been another month of birthdays. We celebrated so many. I am grateful for Magana House because there is enough room for everyone and so many prayers have been prayed. In fact, one person said to me, "God must have given you this house so you can host people, and unite them." Also, God enabled us to bless different family members with a birthday party. Their families do not have enough for a party or even a meal with the whole family, let alone room for all of us. So, we could host, make the food and cake and unite the family to celebrate life. Above all, through that we are praying that Jesus love would overwhelm them and show them Himself.

This month both Habtom and Josiah had their birthdays. Just to think not long ago we almost lost Josiah. What a great celebration of life and the gift of Jesus to have his third birthday with friends and family. Jesus came to give us life and that life more abundantly. Praise Him! Josiah also finished one of his medications. We have two more months of the TB medication. Other big birthday was that, Heather's, grandmother, celebrated 99 years. She was honored by the local high school for her support over the years of all sports events. Also, many people drove by and wished her happy birthday. I think what I really respect and am blessed by are the years and years of love for Jesus, prayer and the faithful Bible study she had done of so many years.



Faith and Hope have been doing really well in the homeschool even though they miss their friends and teachers. I think it is more stress on Habtom and I then on them. They have till end of June. We hope to be handing in all the school work soon. Then they have finished this year. It will be a relief for me. Josiah enjoys doing his homework, which is scribbling on paper.

I have been pleading the blood of Jesus over those we love, our partners, Misgana home and all who enter our home. This is one of my favorite songs to declare with my kids. "There is power, power, wonder working power in the blood of the Lamb. There is power, power (I add healing power), in the precious blood of the Lamb. Who would be free from the burden of sin? There is power in the blood, power in the blood. Who would over evil victory win? There is wonderful power in the blood." Praise Jesus for that all-powerful, redeeming, healing and protecting blood of Jesus. What a great declaration.

Please don't hesitate to let us join you in prayer and praise. Thank you for all your prayers and support.

Abundant blessings,

Habtom, Heather, Faith, Hope and Josiah



Testimony

One big thing I try to praise God for every day and whenever I hear people complaining about the number of COVID-19 cases in Ethiopia is how low the number of cases and deaths are comparatively. I praise God we have not seen the number of cases maybe we should have. Isolation is almost impossible for majority of the population. Many rent small rooms to live in, one in the row of many. People go in taxis to work, or walk. In order to board any transportation, you must have a mask. To enter most offices or supermarkets, you must wear a mask and wash your hands at the door. But when you look at the number of people walking, talking, and going into open air markets, (many without masks or any kind of hand sanitizer) all it brings me to say is "Thank you, Jesus, for your mercy over this country." I praise Him for His Mercy. But there is more to this testimony. Near the beginning of the outbreak someone suggested to me that it would be better to be in America because of the better health care. And yes, America does have a good health care system. However, what came to my heart and mind was the awesome faith of the people of Ethiopia. People who hold onto the truth of the gospel at all cost. People who will pray, like nothing I have ever seen or heard. The majority of the country is Christian-united catholic, orthodox and protestant They are fasting and praying to God. Even though they are a small majority they are the faith of a nation. Wow. I know we can't stand in the medical arena but I do know that in faith this nation will lean on God to be their help and defender. Praise God for His men and women of faith who bow before him night and day and fight the battle in the spiritual realm for this nation and the world to have mercy from God.

PSALM 62:8

"TRUST IN HIM AT ALL TIMES, OH PEOPLE; POUR OUT YOUR HEART BEFORE HIM; GOD IS A REFUGE FOR US."



Visits in Fall

We are believing God that visiting many of you will still be possible this fall-if not the whole church, the mission committees. We continue to pray about what the Lord wants. We hope to see many of you this fall. September, November, and December are open. If you have a date in mind let's get it on the calendar in faith that it will work out. Lord willing!

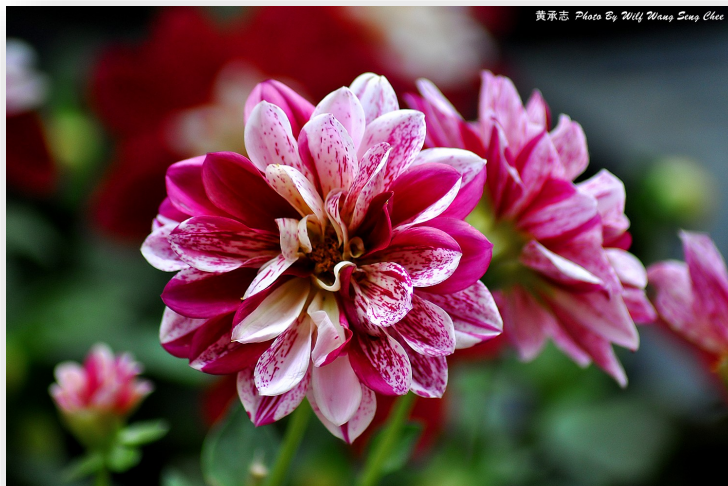


*Jerry Lister 99th
birthday celebration*



GENERAL FUND	May 31, 2020	Year to Date Totals
Income	9,471.31	40,732.32
Expenses	5,555.83	34,723.38
Net Income	3,915.48	6,009.02

DEACONS FUND	May 31, 2020	Year to Date Totals
Income	60.00	1,045.00
Expenses	110.64	942.34
Net Income	-50.64	102.66





JUNE BIRTHDAYS

- 1..... *Awu Ncha (Sarah)*
- 16..... *Awu Ncha*
- *Ako Ncha*
- 17..... *Teri White*

JUNE ANNIVERSARIES



- 6..... *Ty & Elizabeth Talbert (1982)*

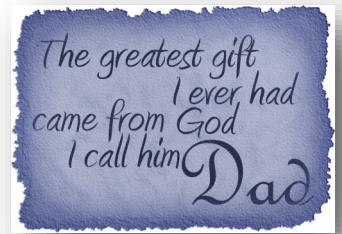
PRAY DURING JUNE FOR THESE FAMILIES

- Pete & Marilyn Mittelstadt*
- Awu Ncha*
- Glen & Kelly Nelson*
- Jerry & Jean Neumann*
- John & Qi Liu Nyeango*
- Alison Osborne*
- Anne Purcell*
- Alice Reille*



June 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				



Father's Day
June 21

Due to the Stay at Home order that is in place, limited activities are scheduled. Worship is being conducted via the email message being sent out weekly. The message can also be found on our FB page and our web site.

Ongoing activities



Sacred Space
June 6, 14, 21, &
28 9:30am via
Zoom



Shalom Class
June 11, 18 & 25
10:30am via
Zoom



Session
June 20
via Zoom

**These activities will resume
once we are able to be
together again**



*Adult Bible
Study Sunday*
at 9:30am



*Worship
Sunday at*
10:30am



Vietnamese Church
every Sunday at
1:30pm



*Last Sunday of
each month is
Food Donation
Sunday.*



*4th Saturday of each
month, Women's
breakfast, Original
Pancake House, Norco,
8am
Loving Needles, 9:45am*





950 Ontario Avenue, Corona CA 92882



MAKING DISCIPLES OF JESUS
CHRIST THROUGH WORSHIP,
DISCIPLESHIP, FELLOWSHIP,
MINISTRY AND MISSION

Our Church Staff

Pastor (Transitional)	Henry DeGraaff
Administrative Assistant	Judy Hanson/Marilyn Mittelstadt
Accompanist	Delia E. Martinez-Samojluk
Church Treasurer	Terrie Burbank
Bookkeeper	Teri White
Parish Associate for the Arts & Spirituality	Becky Millhollin
Director of Social Media	Sue Bain



Phone: 951-734-1920
E-mail: judy@fpc-corona.org
Pastor: 626-808-7472

SUNDAY SCHEDULE
9:30AM Adult Sunday School
10:30AM Worship Service
 Sunday School (nursery care available)
First Press deadline – 22nd of every month
Editor reserves the right to edit for content & space



We're on the WEB
<http://www.fpc-corona.org>
www.facebook.com/coronafirstpresbyterian

