

April 30, 2020

From: Rev. Allen Huff

Dear Friends,

It's that time during spring when days can't make up their minds. Will the temperatures confine us beneath the insulation of heavy coats, or release us into the freedom of thin cotton tees? Will the rains fall as if from buckets or thimbles? Will trees and flowers enliven the air with their fragrant gifts, or will they persecute us with clouds of eye-watering, nose-running, sneeze-inducing spores? Will tender breezes make the dogwood and cherry blossoms sway like couples dancing the last slow dance of the evening? Or will high winds stampede in from the west, toppling shallow-rooted trees, ripping siding off of houses, and howling with all the fury of an adolescent tantrum? Each day asks just a little something different from us. We have to be ready to ponder, adjust, respond.

As we continue our stay-at-home protocols, some of us may be feeling like debris caught in an eddy during dry times on the Nolichucky River—deadwood stuck in a lifeless, brown-foamed swirl. But these spring days are no less vibrant than any other. Our pondering, adjustments, and responses still ask us to pay attention to the changes around us, to watch the skies, to celebrate singing birds and flowering plants, to keep antihistamines on hand, to be ready to batten down lawn chairs and wind chimes, and to give thanks for the rains, the fertility of warm earth, and the approach of summer's growth and autumn's harvest. All of that continues with or without the coronavirus.

While I understand the urge to connect faith to being delivered from, or even protected from the proverbial "storms of life," I also understand that people of mature faith move beyond those expectations. In last Sunday's sermon I spoke of faith as the "great Nonetheless." Faith empowers us not to deny the trials and challenges of human existence. Faith empowers us to enter suffering, ours and that of others, trusting that, come what may, God is in the midst of it. God does not

cause human suffering; through the power of Resurrection, God redeems it by creating *purpose* in and through it, *Nonetheless*.

Faith gave the psalmist the wherewithal to write, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult.” (*Psalms 46:1-3*)

Faith gave Paul (an object of Roman oppression, a prisoner of its jails, and, at times, a prisoner of his own memories of having terrorized Christians in the name of God) the wherewithal to write, “...we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope.” (*Romans 5:3-4*)

We all need a little more faith these days. We all need a little more *Nonetheless* as we navigate the uncertainties of living through the loneliness and isolation, the fears of contagion for ourselves and those we love, and through the anxieties of having enough flour, sugar, soap, and toilet paper. And we all need to help each other through these concerns. We especially need to help those who have been most immediately affected by the losses of loved ones and livelihoods. You all have been part of a magnificent outpouring of money and food to JAMA. I also know of one small group of people actively seeking ways to donate their stimulus checks to help people in need rather than just squirreling away more money they don't need.

In the midst of all the reasons we may have to feel anxious, what fantastic ways to live the *Nonetheless* of grateful faith! Thank you all!

While there is an “other side” to our Covid-19 experience, it's further out than any of us want it to be. *Nonetheless*, God is in the midst of our trouble. *Nonetheless*, the holy alchemy of suffering being transformed into hope (i.e. Resurrection) is at work.

May that promise give you hope, and may that home give you peace.

God's blessings on all of you.

Pastor Allen

JPC Notes:

-The Session met on Tuesday night (April 28) and decided to continue following CDC recommendations. So, at least until our next Session meeting, we will continue to hold worship services and meetings electronically. With the help of the Emergency Response Team, the Session will continue keeping a close watch on Covid-19 developments and changes in local, state, and federal protocols. Having said that, the Session's first concern is the well-being of each and every member of Jonesborough Presbyterian. We will let you all know when we plan to resume in-person gatherings, so please keep be patient and keep our wonderful congregation in your prayers.

-The Town of Jonesborough has run fiber optic cable under our parking lot. By the end of next week, we hope to have Bright Ridge's super-fast internet in the church. That will not only give us a better service, it will save us \$25 per month.

-This coming Sunday is the first Sunday of May, so we will be celebrating the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper during worship. If you want to participate in communion, please go ahead and have your elements prepared by 11:00am on Sunday.

-Thank you all for your continuing and generous financial support of JPC ministries! We will continue to receive tithes and offerings via mail for the foreseeable future, so please mail checks to:

Jonesborough Presbyterian Church

PO Box 383

Jonesborough, TN 37659

ATTN: Treasurer

Prayer Lists:

Church Members:

Evelyn Adams, Pam Dunn, Wilma Florence, Hal Knight, Charlotte McDonald, Jill Sauceman, Bob Scheu, Richard Schwerdtfeger, Cheryl Smith, Tony Smith, Beverlee Wightman

On-going Prayers for Members:

Summer Buchanan, Sara Nan Byrd, Betty Correll, Joseph Dykes, Alisa & Barbara Goolsby, Elizabeth Hoss, Cherry Smith, Larry Smith, Ruth Verhegge

Church Prayer List of Family & Friends and Relatives

Faith Griffey and son-Cooper Brook Adolf (granddaughter and great-grandson of Jim & Charlotte Pahriss) Delbert Elliott, a friend of the DRC, Bobby Yarber (friend of Rebecca Comer,)