

## EWING-COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

### Pastor's Log June 3, 2020

This has been one of the most difficult weeks of my life in ministry. Last Friday, I met Jay Smith and his partner outside the front door of Brandywine Living. We waited while the staff brought his mother Joan down from her room. She came and sat in the doorway in the chair the staff provided. Between us, as we stood at the appropriate distance, was the wooden urn with John's ashes. There we stood and carried out a brief service of remembrance and celebration of the resurrection for John. It was moving, meaningful, but, oh, so shaped by this strange time in which we live. All that this pandemic has brought to us, fear, grief for all the celebrations we have lost, for all the lives we have lost.

There has been a verse of scripture that has been carrying me through these days.

*<sup>38</sup>For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup>nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:38-9*

And then there has been the incredible outpouring of protest following the death of George Floyd at the knee of a police officer. I have forced myself to watch that video again and again to remind myself of the depth of the human depravity that we can fall to when we fail to see the humanity of another person. I have watched with pride, and have joined with others in kneeling in protest of the continuing sin of racism that plays out in our society, and the reality of its impact on the people of this land. I acknowledge that I have benefitted from the systemic domination of people of color by we who have born the title of white. I confess that and seek to repent of sin. I would remind us all that there is only one race, and that is the human race.

I too, have been sickened by the incidences of looting that have happened in the shadows of the countless peaceful protests. But I am dismayed at the response that has come as we once again show our valuing of property over life, as we let the action of legitimate protest become condemned as riot and looting. I find it revealing that as we are reacting to the episodes of looting in this period, we have quietly passed without notice the 99<sup>th</sup> anniversary of one of the most atrocious riots in our nation's history, the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921. Look it up and you will find one more example of the oppression that people of color have endured at the hands of whites.

Is looting wrong? Of course, it is. Is rioting wrong? Of course, it is. But this is not either of those.

Why the vandalism and looting? Much of it is individuals and groups seeking to hide their personal gain under the cover of peaceful protest. But as has been said, if you are continually brutalized, eventually you strike out at whatever is around you.



There is another passage from the Apostle Paul that has guided me in these days:

*<sup>26</sup> If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.*

I have often heard in recent days that we are living in the midst of two Pandemics, the Covid - 19 Pandemic, and the continuing Pandemic of racism. The coming together of these has laid bare our vulnerability. But even here the impact of the Covid virus has had far greater impact on the people whose color is described as black or brown than those described as white. But my experience of being fearful that something could attack my health, my wariness of being near another person, my experience of only being able to go certain places, of not being free to enter any building I choose because of the necessity to shelter that the coronavirus has forced; perhaps that has made me just a bit more aware what it feels like for my brothers and sisters who live in fear of the virus of racism.

Again, there is a verse from Paul that is guiding me in this time:

*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.* Romans 12:2

Finally, where shall we find our hope in this time? The 121st Psalm tells us that our help comes from the Lord our God. But it is again Paul who has given me strength for this time. My paraphrase, God works for good though all things, for those who believe. This is the reassurance that God is at work in our midst in these difficult times. God is working in us to bring good from this time. For me the question is, how will I let God work through me. Let's find our answer to that question together.

Blessings,  
Pastor Paul

### **Congregational Conversation on June 14<sup>th</sup>**

We will remain together after the June 14<sup>th</sup> worship service for a conversation among the full worshipping congregation for a time to discuss the final steps in bringing the two congregations together as one. We will use our zoom meeting to provide the avenue for asking questions, hearing answers, making suggestions as we take our final steps alongside each other and become one.

### **Congregational Meetings on June 28<sup>th</sup>**

We will remain together following worship on June 28<sup>th</sup> for a combined meeting of the Ewing and Covenant Congregations. Each congregation will vote on the actions it must take to bring about the blending of the congregations. At the end of those meetings we will come together on-line to mark the moment with prayer and song.

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### **Meet Freddy Sanchez**

Hello all,



My name is Freddy Sanchez; I am very excited to be joining your congregation this summer as an intern. I come to you from the Chicagoland area where I have grown to love city life, meeting new people, and the best pizza in the world. This September I will be entering my third and final year of my Master of Divinity at Princeton Seminary. Prior to grad school, I attended Wheaton College in IL where I received my Bachelor of Arts in Biblical and Theological Studies. At Wheaton, I was privileged to study abroad at Jerusalem University and the University of Oxford. My undergraduate and graduate years have significantly shaped my love for travel and learning. My hope during this internship is that I continue to grow in a closer relationship with God alongside you. And I pray that through this

time in our nation we would pursue peace, hope, and love amidst adversity. I look forward to meeting and speaking with you soon.

Yours,

Freddy Sanchez