

August 26, 2020

Dear Friends,

Whenever I ponder what it means to be “the church” or a “vital community of faith,” I’m immediately reminded of verses from Chapter 4 of the apostle Paul’s letter to the Ephesians: *“Lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ... Speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love.*

Regardless of the times and challenges humanity endures, we as Jesus followers are called to make an impact on the world around us by sharing God’s love with others in bold and creative ways. In the midst of what is probably the most trying of periods—a global pandemic, heightened demands for racial justice, and an intense presidential election—Emory Presbyterian Church is doing significant ministry. All of which is in response to the daily summons from God to build up the body of Christ through acts of worship and prayer; compassion and care; mission, education, and service.

Much of the work these days is being done with various technology because of Covid-19. The church’s Session has courageously decided to continue this great adventure in virtual and alternative ministry through the Spring of 2021 or until there is a vaccine and affective treatment. In the spirit of “bearing with one another in love,” we’ll keep worshipping and meeting online, and offering safe outdoor gatherings when possible.

During the month of September, the Worship Committee, Justin, Deedra, and I will be having conversations about innovative and meaningful approaches for the seasons of Advent and Christmas. And there’s a lot of exciting opportunities to look forward to in the coming months:

- 9/6: Special Labor Day Weekend Garden Party w/Frogmore Stew, 5:30 pm
- 9/13: Disability Inclusion Day w/L’Arche (Online Worship); Fall Kickoff, 1pm (Zoom)
- 9/19: Providing food for Clifton Sanctuary Meal
- 9/20: Drive-Thru Blessing of the Animals Event, 1:30 pm
- 10/4: World Communion Sunday (Online Worship); Garden Party, 4 pm
- 10/11: Breaking Bread, 1 pm (Zoom)
- 10/18, 10/25, 11/1, 11/8: Stewardship Season—“*Our Money Story*” (Online Worship)
- 10/25: Congregational Meeting to Elect New Class of Elders, 1pm (Zoom)
- 10/27: Antiracism Book Study—“*So, You Want to Talk About Race*”, 7 pm (Zoom)
- 11/1: Garden Party, 4 pm
- 11/8: Breaking Bread, 1pm (Zoom)
- 11/21: Providing food for Clifton Sanctuary Meal

In addition, we have the monthly EPC Book Club (Zoom); the weekly Men's Fellowship Breakfast (Zoom) and the weekly Racial Justice Protests on the church's front lawn. Also, the Antiracism Book Study group is looking to address racism through a mission initiative; the staff is brainstorming the possibility of occasional online Taizé services, and church leadership is discerning the best way for the Presbyterian Women's Circles to gather in the Fall. **Mark your calendars so you don't miss out on chances to keep building the body of Christ together!**

Finally, I am grateful for the generous sharing of your time, gifts, and financial resources, especially during this current health crises. Your generosity makes a profound difference in the lives of many in the community and beyond. **Your humility and gentleness, rooted in the Spirit, is what makes all the ministry we do possible.**

Since a new Stewardship Season and budget planning year is around the corner, I also want to encourage you to help us finish 2020 strong. We're projecting that even with the fulfilling of current stewardship pledges and continuation of weekly worship tithes, we will have budget deficit of \$4,000 at year's end. Any increased giving—whether it comes from a first-time giver or a long-time pledger—will be helpful in reducing the shortfall. Thank you for prayerfully considering this opportunity to contribute further to the church's ministry. Know that above all, I am grateful for how you embody the teachings of Christ and seek to establish peace and unity in your daily life. It is an honor and blessing to serve among you as your pastor.

Let us remain in prayer for our world and respond again and again to God's invitation to grow in love.

Rev. Andy Acton