

May 2020

editor Daisy Wilson

Spreading the Good News



First Presbyterian Church
Douglas, GA.



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Such Things

I know that when faced with a crisis or some big loss or obstacle, I rise to the challenge. I thrive on the adrenaline of the issue, as painful as it may be. I connect best with God from the depths of sorrow. In desperation, I receive the grace to respond, even if it is only by embracing my powerlessness (not an act to be dismissed as easy).

This pandemic is probably the most impactful crisis our globe has experienced, certainly in my lifetime. And in response, many feel . . . anxiety, fear, grief. Many frontline workers are or will experience symptoms of PTSD.

I breathe with an undercurrent of guilt. Personally, I am remarkably unaffected by COVID-19. I can work from home, and I and those I love are healthy and financially secure. I don't even know anyone who has been directly affected, except for one distant relative who tested positive but has recovered as far as I know.

I am adjusting to this New Normal, moving our core church programs online. I'm able to continue our weekly worship and Bible study as well as helping hurting people through prayer. Online giving and donations via the church Post Office Box is providing the income required to keep our church going.

My privileged status generates as much shame as gratitude. It's a weird kind of survivor guilt. Why am I so lucky to be healthy, have a good job, and to enjoy access (albeit remotely) to all that I need? It feels silly and unspeakably selfish to realize that my biggest losses from coronavirus are from touch deprivation (I miss the hugs and handshakes).

And yet . . . as a pastor, I know that loss is loss and grief is grief. Recently, I read a wonderful article that described the differences in types of crises and humans' responses. The drama of war is terrible, but also energizing. It typically creates a fight or flight response, which pumps adrenaline and cortisol throughout the system. In contrast, this virus enemy is completely insidious, stealthy, invisible. Most of us don't see, feel, touch it, and are untouched by it. Yet it's out there, we know -- chronically, unendingly (it seems) out there.

In the face of a chronic, especially largely unseen stressor, many of us tend to freeze.

We can't get our hands around it, only to wash them incessantly. We can barely get our minds around it, at least those of us fortunate enough to be spared personal witness to the war zones of hospitals or nursing homes. It is beyond our control. So we deny, distract, self-medicate, or shut down, because to let in the horror (both human and economic) is too much, especially if there is precious little we can do to abate these consequences.

How then do we cope? I actually picked up my Bible this morning, my real Bible, not the version I have on my phone or computer. It's the one I've had for almost 40 years. Just the weight of it in my hand is comforting, vastly different from reading the same passages on a tiny screen. Here are a few verses of encouragement I read:

- *“My grace is sufficient for you”*, God replied when St. Paul complained of the thorn in his side.
- *“I will be with you always”*, Jesus says, *“even to the end of the age”*.
- *“God works all things together for good, for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose”*.
- and *“nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus”*.

A favorite passage of mine from St. Paul is found in Philippians 4:

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. 9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

“Whatever is true, ... noble, ... right, ... pure, ... lovely, ... admirable, ... excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things.” Most days I'm blessed to find such things to think about, although it's harder than it used to be.

I notice hopeful witnesses in nature. A neighborhood walk yields the delight of birds in the trees and blooming flowers bent by the recent storms, but not broken. I watch videos of the helpers, the pieces about the creative kindness of strangers and friends. I listen to music that soothes. I see the pictures of how our Mother Earth is repairing herself when unmolested by humans' intrusion and marvel at her possibility of healing when given a chance. I watch the signs of spring unfolding and remember that year after year rebirth happens, even in the time of coronavirus.

Think about “such things”. What are you thinking about?



Happy BIRTHDAY

Gray McKinnon...May 01

Gracie Reed Miller...May 01

Ard James...May 07

Mary Charles McLean ...May 12

Aaron Reed...May 12

Margie Spivey...May 15

Matt Clayton...May 17

Nancy Fussell...May 17

Kylie Childers...May 27

Laney Childers...May 27

Amanda Allison...May 30

Dorothy Donaldson...May 31



Miss DOT turns 100 on May 31st



Bailey Martin is a 2020 graduate of Coffee High School. She will be attending ABAC in the fall with plans to study animal science or horticulture. She is the daughter of John Martin and Angel Steverson.



Jackson Edward Martin is a 2020 Graduate of Pierce County High School. He will be attending Georgia Southern University to pursue a Business Marketing degree. In addition, he also hopes to study Theology. He is the son of Jeff and Lisa Martin and has three older sisters: Madison, Harper Lee, and Natalie.

Several years ago I always had a section in the newsletter called "With a Song in my Heart."

This month with all that is going on in the world, I think that it is very appropriate to add the lyrics to this song

YOU'LL NEVER WALK ALONE

When you walk through a storm

Hold your chin up high

And don't be afraid of the dark.

At the end of a storm

Is a golden sky

And the sweet, silver song of a lark.

Walk on, through the wind,

Walk on, through the rain,

Though your dreams be tossed and blown.

Walk on, walk on with hope in your heart,

And you'll never walk alone,

You'll N E V E R walk alone.

Have You Heard?

I heard that the resurrected man named Jesus has gone to heaven.

I heard that He led His disciples out as far as Bethany.

I heard that He raised His hands to bless the disciples and was received up into heaven.

I heard that He sat down at the right hand of God.

Have you seen this **SEATED MAN**, Jesus?

Do you know Him?

I heard that the man called Jesus is coming back!

I heard that He is coming back for His children.

*I heard that He has prepared a place for them, that where He is,
there they may be also.*

Have you met this **SOON-COMING KING**, Jesus?

DO YOU KNOW HIM?

