



Good News for the Pews

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From Pastor Don

Each day that the Shelter-In-Placer order remains in effect I wonder what the long term consequences will be. It has already been more than 120 days, or four months, and clearly as we look around, it will certainly be months longer before we have reached equilibrium again. And of course probably months after that before there is some kind of vaccine. I'm not anything close to being a medical professional, researcher or otherwise, so I am not going to speculate on timelines but I think it is evident to reasonable people that this is now the new normal.

You may recall that months ago I was very insistent on refraining from using that phrase, "new normal" because I wanted to accentuate that this was decidedly *not normal*. I still don't think our current situation is normal (whatever that word means) but clearly this is how things will be for a while. Lots of things are in flux, lots of things are in transition, and I believe the longer we are Sheltering-In-Place the more likely that permanent change will come about.

You can think about retail businesses, you can think about food service (restaurants and cafes), you can even think about personal care businesses like gyms, hair-stylists, day-spas. On the one hand, yes, we are all kind of waiting to get back to patronizing these businesses, but on the other hand surely there is going to be a serious shift in the whole retail-landscape. Some (many?) places that have suspended their activity may not reopen. And some of those will not be replaced. We've learned that while we miss these kinds of establishments, we don't actually

need them. That is a pretty big realization. Although Amazon and online retail has been available for more than 20 years (Amazon was an online book retailer that began in 1994) we are seeing now, that for many people like us, with internet access, and with bank accounts, addresses where things can be shipped, debit and credit cards, and enough ready income, we can now do many things completely online. Not everyone can, but a lot of us can. We've been able to adapt quickly (though perhaps not comfortably).

We can even do church online. Certainly we have been since March. And with the way things are going there is no indication we'll be going back into the sanctuary anytime soon. So, what does this mean for church as an institution generally, and what does it mean for our church specifically? I think we have all just sort of thought this is temporary and then when we're in the clear we'll just go back to way we did things before. I thought this way. I am not so sure anymore.

I am not trying to 'telegraph' any decisions that we've made in the Commission, or in the Session. I'm not writing this a visionary with a plan. I am writing this as person of faith living in this time, trying to guess what happens next. We are missing lots of things by worshipping virtually. But we have also gained some things. Depending on where you live, you may be saving hours of travel time on Sunday but not having to drive into Chinatown. That means you

On July 10 the English Worshipping Community of PCC co-hosted an Interfaith Vigil entitled Chinese American Resilience and Solidarity, with Chinese for Affirmative Action and Chinese Medicine and Magic.

Here is the opening Faith Statement from Rev. Hammond:

I am the Interim Minister for the English Language Worshipping Community of the Presbyterian Church in Chinatown. I speak today as a servant of PCC and while I cannot give my witness since I am not Chinese-American, in the ancient traditions of my faith, I am here to bear witness to the resilience and solidarity of this community that has worked for justice and the liberation of Chinese immigrants for over 165 years. Our church, the oldest Asian-American church in North America, we are grateful to be co-hosting this vigil today.

The Presbyterian Church USA has issued several statements condemning the current inhumane practices of the Federal Government with regard to immigration issues, family separations and detentions. Here is a synopsis of some of our denomination's public statements:

Through the lens of our Christian faith and in light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ we call all to work for just and humane policies for all immigrant communities, grounded in the principles of family unity, human dignity, and rights.

[We] call upon the federal government to immediately end the newly implemented zero-tolerance policy that is tearing apart families.

[We] call upon the federal government to reunite parents and children that have been separated as soon as possible, under the care of the community, not in family detention ensuring access of attorneys to those in detention.

[We] call upon the federal government to make certain that every parent in custody knows the location of their children and facilitate regular communication between parents and their children until they are reunited.

[We] call upon the federal government to not use possible reunification with children to force immigrant parents into a concession to plead guilty to a crime in exchange for reuniting with their children.

The Presbyterian Church in Chinatown is dedicated to serving the Chinese Immigrant and Chinese-American communities; to serving all people as we understand Christ's command to love God by loving our neighbors. We are dedicated to live the Biblical commandments to do justice, to love kindness, and to share a humble witness of God.

A Stewardship Minute

In the May *Good News from the Pews*, Dave Soohoo wrote about the ongoing financial support needed to keep the church running in this unprecedented time of uncertainty. Although we have been unable to worship on-site for about four months, with on-site use only for the essential weekly food pantry, the bills for insurance, solar panel loan, HVAC and elevator service, and basic utilities continue. Otherwise, our pastor's salary package is our only employee expense.

Thanks to the expertise and technical wizardry of Dave Chan and Nancy Chee, and the work of the Worship Planning Team (pastor Don, Dave Miller, Norma Chan, Diane Go, Ed Kam and Nancy Chee) we have jump-started and improved our virtual worship experience – something that was in our “future plans” when the shelter-in-place order came through – and turned it into a must-have NOW. About 70 plus computers are tuned in for the YouTube streaming each Sunday, streaming our services locally to The Sequoias, to Doug Clark in Chula Vista, Jeanette Wei and Jim Caldwell in San Antonio, Texas, and even to Carol Poong in England! The Zoom platform has kept our committees, fellowship and School of Discipleship groups doing their thing. And the virtual tea times each Sunday have allowed us to share and build community. We have invested in equipment and look to train others to help keep these capabilities in place going forward.

As of June 30, our English Worshipping Community budget shows a surplus! Since our budgets have not traditionally relied on “loose” offering contributions, we are fortunate to have a consistent and faithful stream of income from your pledges to cover our financial needs. Except for receiving a grant from the SF Presbytery given to all member churches that was shared with the three worshipping communities, we have not needed to apply for emergency loans or grants to cover our expenses. Again using technology, we have gone from 3 to 17 units giving on-line, with the balance of contributions coming from checks mailed in to the church that I pick up and deposit twice a month. Thanks to you, the Commission is glad not to have to worry about our financial picture.

Blessings to you, and stay safe.

Winchell Quock, EWC treasurer

Meeting via zoom since April has not hampered the work of the Mission & Evangelism Committee! Our work is guided by *Micah 6:8 – To do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with our God.* If you have questions or want to get more involved, contact any of the committee members: Ed Chin, Doreen Der-McLeod, Jeanette Huie, Cindy Joe, Gilbert Lee, Jeanine Lim Chan and Susie Wong.

FOOD PANTRY

PCC kept the Saturday Food Pantry open during the pandemic and we encouraged our volunteers older than 60 years old to stay home. Many young adults stepped up to volunteer but we can always use more! Contact Susie Wong if you can volunteer on Saturdays from 10:30-12:00. We are now providing food for 130 seniors and adults with disabilities. Scott Barlow also provides home delivery for 16 seniors who are too frail to pick up their own food.

To protect all our volunteers, the City of San Francisco provides PCC with PPE. The Presbytery of San Francisco also showed their support with a \$500 contribution! Since the end of June we have implemented temperature-taking as another precaution. Nancy Chee has been taking temperatures of our volunteers with her cool infrared thermometer. If someone registers a high temperature, he/she cannot work at the pantry. Fortunately all our volunteers have had normal temperatures. With the funds from Presbytery, we will purchase several infrared thermometers for PCC which might come in handy once we return to the building for worship and meetings.

Our pantry volunteers say this is their favorite SF-Marin Food Bank truck!



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