



Our denomination's national gathering that happens every two years, General Assembly (224th) met on June 19th and opened with greetings and worship in a way that's never been done before – virtually. In prep for this meeting, a LOT had to change, including the way business is done and a hard look at what business can realistically be done in this new forum. This was not an easy task, nor an easy process, and even now, not everyone is happy with the decisions. It's a hard time, and so to acknowledge this the theme for this year's GA (General Assembly) is from Lament to Hope. They are structured worship services around this, offered a mid-week Bible study for commissioners, and have asked those participating in this year's GA to send in short videos sharing their laments and their hopes.

And well, honestly, I think they are on to something with this theme from Lament to Hope. We as individuals and as the gathering body of Christ need to lament. Unfortunately, it is something that we've lost touch with (especially the white church today) as much of our society is uncomfortable with lament, both in the individual form but especially in the communal form. In a sense, we just don't know what to do with it, it makes us uncomfortable. Sharing joys, happiness, and goodness with others is so much easier than sharing pain, grief, and sadness (and if we are honest, is much more exhausting than sharing in the joys). And yet, here we are, in the middle of a pandemic that has caused economic catastrophes and in the midst of an anti-racism movement. This is also on top of everything else going on in our personal lives. I'm not sure about you, but I've been lamenting a great deal lately. Lamenting over church not being the same, the stress of having to learn all new technologies at the turn of a hat. Lamenting preaching to a video camera with no immediate feedback (or at times any feedback), lamenting the worshiping body is spread afar for major church holidays of Easter and Pentecost. On top of this I've been lamenting my own wedding, postponed in hopes we can even still have a small celebration (and all the stress that goes with rearranging all the plans). This year was supposed to be my first time ever attending General Assembly, let alone actually be a commissioner (someone who gets to do the work on committees and make decisions and votes to help further the life of the church). I'm the racial injustices that continue in our country and the sin many in the church continue to commit. I'm lamenting the lives lost to COVID, those lost not to COVID and the ways grief is limited to 10 people graveside services. Do you know how hard it is to limit grief? And yet, by no longer understanding lament, in a sense, we've been limiting grief for years.

Beloved in Christ, there is a lot to lament in our world, in our nation, even in our personal lives. For even as we move forward, nothing will be the same again. And while we can find some hope in that, for there are some much needed changes in our nation and in our world, I think we need to not be so quick to move into the hope. Now, I'm not saying we never move into hope or that we shouldn't hope or shouldn't acknowledge the hope we do have, but that perhaps we need to take some more time in the lament stage (which I know, can be very exhausting). We need to not gloss over it so quickly because there's growth even in this, and God meets us, even here.

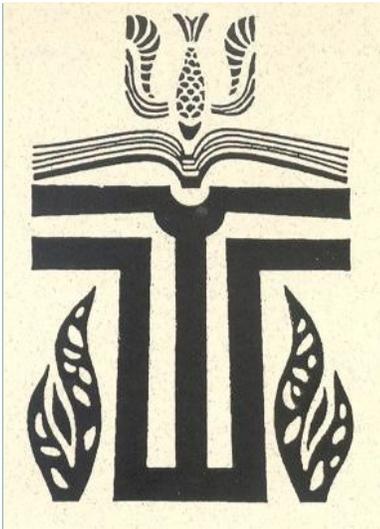
The book of Psalms in Hebrew is called *Tehillim*, meaning praises but what's interesting is that the majority of the psalms are not praise or even thanksgiving, but lament. This highlights just how important our ancestors before us felt that lamenting is for our health and for our relationship with God, both individually and communally (remember psalms were sung communally). It perhaps also gives us a glimpse into understanding the need to lament.

Continued on pg 2



Good News Gazette

First
Presbyter-
ian Church
of
Chester,
NY
94-96
Main
Street
Chester,
NY 10918



Wedding Update:

Due to the on-going issues of the pandemic, Pastor Erin and James Peterson are postponing their wedding until August 14th. There is hope all will be able to join in the ceremony to celebrate but as of now there are many unknowns. Updates will be given closer to the date on if the congregation will be able to join physically or not or if there is a possibility for the ceremony to be shared virtually.

Continued...

Old Testament scholar Ellen Davis states, “When you lament in good faith, opening yourself to God honestly and fully – no matter what you have to say – then you are beginning to clear the way for praise. You are straining toward the time when God will turn your tears into laughter. When you lament, you are asking God to create the conditions in which it will become possible for you to offer praise – conditions, it turns out, that are mainly within your own heart.”

Can we honestly open up praise to our God if we don't fully name what's on our hearts? Are we authentic in our praise if we don't take the needed time to lament? Or, do we hinder someone else's faith journey, someone else's authentic relationship with God when we don't allow them the space they need to lament?

What might you need to lament today? What personal and individual laments do you need to name to God? What laments do we as a congregation need to do together? What laments of the Church universal have we often helped to silence as they make us uncomfortable? And how do we go about entering into these times of lament together? Honestly, I don't have answers for all of these questions, especially since some of them are very individual and very personal. However, I think the best starting place for all of this is by opening the book of Psalms, or the book of Lamentations, to get not just guidance but to help us express our own personal laments and our communal laments.

Beloved, I pray you take some time over the next week or month or however long you need to lament to God, for our God desires even this so that we can more fully enter into a deep and authentic and rich relationship. May we all take some time, so that we can one day more authentically and deeply, and with much more richness, praise our God, both individually and together. And may you find God's comfort and peace and presence among you in this time, and may it lead you into trusting in the one and only true hope for our lives – the love of God through Christ Jesus our Lord (in which nothing can separate and in which the Spirit so deeply connects us). Amen.

Buildings and Grounds Update

If you have some spare time, consider some church grounds clean-up. There are bushes along the front of the CE building that need to be trimmed, there are weeds along the front and side garden beds that need to be addressed (as well as by the church sign), and there's always work needed for the memorial garden to be cleaned up. Any help is greatly appreciated!

Also, the roof of the CE building around the chimney and the one valley have been repaired to stop any leaks. With this completed we can now continue to work on finishing the insulation (when the weather allows!).

Food Pantry Update

We are currently serving about 50 families, an increase from the fall/winter when it was about 30-40 families. The procedure to do this safely has drastically changed the way the food is distributed as we no longer do the shoppers model but are back to packing boxes. We try to accommodate each family with specific needs as best we are able to do so (for example, low salt, diabetic, etc...). Our volunteer base has also changed a bit as many of our regular helpers fall into the higher risk category and we've asked them to make the decision to remain home if they feel it unsafe to help (and are thankful that many have done so!). We have also seen an outpouring of support from our community in the first month of the pandemic alone we had about \$4000 come in as donations. This has helped in significant ways as we've need to purchase more items from ShopRite than in the past. These donations came in through individuals as well as some of our local small businesses. Also, Rise and Root farm, down off Meadow Ave, set up a "buyers club" to help the folks in our community buy produce locally (knowing the grocery stores were hit and miss for awhile). With this, they also sent up a way to have local produce donated to the food pantry. For May and June we were able to hand out a total of 150 salad mixes/spinach mixes as well as some extra donated herbs. We truly are blessed by our community, please support our local businesses and farmers if you are able to do so!

Capital Campaign Update

It is with great JOY that we share with you we have surpassed our first year's goal (of the five year campaign) and raised \$21,106! Please note, this total does not include the additional \$6,000 matching grant we received from NY Landmark's Conservancy Sacred Sites grant. We kicked off the campaign last July and so at the end of June we are wrapping up the first year. Due to so much going on, the committee hasn't been able to meet to fully determine what year 2 will look like but as of right now we are hoping we can at least match what we've made in year 1. More information will be forthcoming but ask that you continue to prayerfully consider how you might be able to contribute to this work of the church.

It is also with joy that we share the old sanctuary steps have been removed and they are currently working on replacing them with a new, much safer set of stairs!

Work on the food pantry stairs will begin on Monday, June 29th!

Thank you to everyone who continues to help with this campaign to make it a success! Our God has blessed us and continues to bless us with such amazing resources to serve the needs of our community. Let us continue to give thanks!



Second Offering

There will be no second offering for July. If you feel inclined to give something extra please give to the capital campaign, food pantry, or benevolence fund.

Ruling Elders:

Vicki Braidotti
Ron Brooks
Ruth Magyar
Jerry Sutherland
Matt Van Der Meulen
Clerk of Session
Gene Winters

Deacons:

Edna Babcock
Jean Barrett-
Helen Braidotti
Joanne Brooks
Vanessa Magyar
James Peterson—
Moderator & treasurer

Church Office:

(845) 469-4877

E-mail:

info@chespresny.com

Website:

www.chespresny.com

Facebook page:

[www.facebook.com/
chespresny](http://www.facebook.com/chespresny)

Presbytery News

It seems so long ago, but last fall our presbytery council decided to enter into a pilot program with Holy Cow! Church Assessment Tool. It is a tool/program that is used across the country and across denominations that helps churches through discernment processes, during times of transitions, or just to get a read of the important aspects of a congregations organizational culture. The presbytery hopes to use this assessment tool with all congregations in the future but is starting with just a handful for now as they slowly roll out the program. And the good news is that we've been selected to participate in this program for free! Normally, the cost would be about \$500-1000. Our presbytery is working with a number of smaller churches (and two medium to larger churches) through this program to see how it can help the churches (which are majority smaller) in our presbytery. The program itself is just data collection and doesn't tell us what we should or shouldn't do moving forward but gives us a clearer picture of who we are, how our members feel about our church, and help us discover where our members would like to go in our future together (as well as show us where we might get caught up with changes along the way as we desire to move into the future together). This is an exciting thing and the Session is thankful we were accepted to participate for free (and that the presbytery is valuing the ministry of small churches and doing what they can to help)! Over the next month, we will continue to remind you of this program, answer any questions (to the best of our ability), and get the materials prepared. Usually, data collection is done online. We know this is not an option for everyone and we can have hard copies available with someone designated to plug it into the online program at a later date. We will ask you to fill out the form (whether a hard copy or online) in August and on Sept 13th (if all goes well) we will welcome an interpreter from Holy Cow to come in and have a conversation with us about the data collected for our congregation. Again, this will give us insights as we discern our future in serving God faithfully in this time and place.

Summer sermon series

We have kicked off our summer series of "Summer at the Movies: Finding God on Film" and we hope you've been enjoying getting to hear a bit of how we can find God just about anywhere and how some of these movies shine a light into some important theological themes and lessons. We also hope that you've been able to enjoy a few other voices as we have shared our pulpit a few times now. As we continue to discern resuming in-person worship, our summer series may have to adapt as well. However, for now, we will remain with this series and from time to time will continue to hear other voices from across the country and across denominations. And we praise God for the ability to do this during this time and the ability to broaden the voices being heard in our pulpit.

As a reminder, our worship videos will still be put together and edited by Pastor Erin whether or not she is preaching. The layout and structure will remain the same with being posted to Facebook and YouTube and printed copies available to those who prefer it.

As a reminder, our services are posted to our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/chespresny/ and our YouTube page: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCrLgI6VOe9lbmcfB4dRHGfA>

If you would prefer a print out copy of the bulletin and sermon, please call the church 845-469-4877 or email at info@chespresny.com

We also send out weekly email reminders, if you would like to be added to this list please email the church at info@chespresny.com (please note, if you have not been receiving these emails it is either because we do not have your email address, the one we have is outdated, or it was not recorded properly in our directory).

Denominational News

Our denominations General Assembly kicked off Friday, June 19th at 7pm. It was an interesting gathering as it was the first time ever it was held online via Zoom. Our Stated Clerk, J. Herbert Nelson welcomed us and there were many other forms of welcome and testimonials from our siblings across the US, especially our Native American siblings. It was a powerful opening message and worship service. We then moved into some new procedures as there is nothing in our standing rules that allowed for such an online meeting to be allowed. There were some questions, clarifications, and brief discussions around these changes that were ultimately adopted (and made it so we could continue on with the 224th General Assembly!). However, the first night did not go as planned with moving through some of the “easy” business to the election of moderators for the new assembly. Item 01-04 which put forward a consent agenda for what items were information only, what items would be the work of the 224th General Assembly, and what work would be recommended for the 225th General Assembly (in 2022). The majority of work was recommended to be put off until the 225th GA which led to a number of motions to try and move some of this work to this assembly, noting some items cannot wait another two years. However, even this work got interrupted by some contentious issues and was eventually cut short at 11:30pm after voting to move the election of the co-moderators until Saturday night, June 20th, at 7pm (originally there was no meeting planned for Saturday night at all, just June 19th, June 26th and June 27th).

We met Saturday June 21st, with a motion on the floor to reconsider item 01-04, this was seconded and will be discussed, debated, and decided as the first item of business on Friday June 26th. After this, we finally were able to get to the election of the co-moderators. We heard statements from each of the three pairs as well as a time for answering a number of questions from the body. Around 8:45pm we submitted our votes and within a few minutes we had officially elected our new co-moderators for the 224th General Assembly, Ruling Elder Elona Street Stewart and Teaching Elder (minister of word and sacrament) Gregory Bentley. This was an emotional vote and one that surprised many as with three pairs of candidates, it usually requires more than one vote to have a clear, majority winner. They were then installed into their new positions and we closed the meeting with prayer.

The work of the 224th GA will continue on June 26th with a lot of unknowns of how these two days of business (Friday and Saturday) will go and what may be the end result (if we are able to finish all the business or not). While I will not have an update for you by the time this newsletter goes out, I will follow up with announcements on Facebook (www.facebook.com/chespresny/) and announcements in the July 5th bulletin. If you would please keep this assembly in your prayers, especially that we may truly and fully be guided by the Holy Spirit to do this important work in a way that it's never been done before.

For your information, every two years we meet as a denomination from across the country. Each presbytery sends a certain number of commissioners (as well as Young Adult Delegates) to do the work of the larger church body. There are also Mission Advisory Delegates (from across the world with partnered churches and mission organizations to our denomination) and Theological Advisory Delegates (seminary students from across the country). This work of the church ranges from determining the Per Captia (funding that helps support Presbyteries, Synods, and the Office of the General Assembly), to decisions on larger financial or legal matters, any changes needed to over Book of Order (polity/government of the church documents) as well as social justice matters. Much of this work comes to the assembly from Presbyteries sending in overtures to be considered for changes or from denominational committees or denominational offices like Presbyterian Mission Agency (among others). This is holy and hard work and work that calls us as the larger body to connect and discern together.

Crafters Corner

One of the fundraisers we still hope to be able to have in the fall is a craft fair. However, we will need everyone's help to be able to pull this off (as possibly the only fundraiser we may be able to have this year and the foreseeable future). You do not need to be "crafty" in order to help. For example:

We are looking for people to paint some cut tree stumps orange (we can provide the paint/materials needed and the stumps). And if you think you are capable, perhaps even paint a little face on it at well. If not, even just painting it orange will be incredible helpful!

We are looking for people to paint some other cut wood so we can make ornaments. This can be just a white (or other colored background) or if you are comfortable painting a design.

We are looking both for wood pallets and some help painting the pallets.

If you are crafty and can knit, crochet, quilt, needlepoint, sew, etc... we'd encourage you to make what you make best or love to make! If needed, we can supply materials as well for this.

We are still collecting bottle caps (metal), wine corks (the real cork, not the plastic kind), pine cones, pillow cases in good condition, t-shirts in good condition, fabric, wood pallets, yarn, malt-o-meal cereal bags, and any flower pots or tea cups you are no longer using or have a need for.

If you have any ideas, we'd love to hear them! We hope you will consider helping in this effort in some way! We know that Florida Presbyterian Church raised over \$8000 last year for the craft fair. While we know this would be a stretch for us given our circumstances, we do hope to make this a successful fundraiser if we are able to host it in the fall!

Recycling

We have begun a new recycling program with TerraCycle. This program collects various items and finds ways to re-use, re-purpose, or completely recycle them in some way! On top of it, for each item we send in, we collect points and those points can be redeemed for a donation to a charitable organization (our church!).

Right now, we are currently collecting:

- Vitamin and supplement packaging, Personal care and foot care packaging, and throat and nasal care packaging (blister packs, tubes, bottles, caps, lids, cans, boxes)
- Infant formula and child nutrition packaging (tubs, bottles, caps, lids, cans, boxes)
- Any old cell phone cases or Popsocket brand products

NEW--- disposable razors and its packaging

NEW - empty writing instruments (pens, markers, etc...), glue sticks, water-color dispensers, paint sets, and flexible packaging.

We can also collect old cell phones, tablets, laptops, and inkjet cartridges (from HP and Cannon only, no toner cartridges). However, it is recommended that all personal information be cleaned from the devices before they are sent in. Please see Pastor Erin if you have any of these items as we need a certain amount before we can send it in for recycling.

Items can be dropped off in the marked bin next to the food pantry bin along the side of the church.

Reminder we are still collecting:

Pinecones, Corks, Pillowcases (in good condition), T-shirts (in good condition), Fabric, Pallets, Yarn, Malt-o-Meal cereal bags

If you have any flower pots or tea cups you are no longer using, we will gladly find use for them!

At this time, we do not have a collection site set up. If you have any of these items please let Pastor Erin or Betty Ann Reilly know. A time can be set for pick up or a drop off at the church.

Clothing Bin:

At this time, our clothing bin has been removed as the company was not able to keep up. It is uncertain if it will be back soon or if we will need to search for a new company/bin. Thank you for your patience.