



This Sunday, May 31st, marks Pentecost Sunday. This is also usually referred to as the birth of the church. Scripture opens in Acts how on this day when many were gathered together... That's a hard line to hear right now, when many were gathered together.

Oh, how I had dreamed of a big Pentecost celebration of all of us gathering together, especially after we weren't able to gather for Easter. I had hoped to be decorating the sanctuary, picking joyful, Spirit-filled hymns, welcoming everyone into our building, into our space to worship our God together. A Pentecost that all would be sure to remember!

For so often, Pentecost, much like the Holy Spirit is thought of as the third-wheel. We celebrate Christmas and Easter with big festivities and much joy. We can remember both Christmases and Easters past with perhaps what we wore – big hats, white shoes, our favorite Christmas sweater. We remember them by who was gathered with us, if it rained or snowed, if we could gather outside for a sunrise service or if it was 70 degrees on Christmas Eve. Yet, never in my life have I ever heard anyone treat Pentecost like this, families don't gather, there's little celebration outside the church or even within the church (some churches skip this festival day all together!). We celebrate Jesus the Son and God the Father so often and yet we don't always know what to do with the Holy Spirit. I heard a joke the other day how a denomination describes the three persons of the Trinity: God the Father, Christ the Son, Holy Spirit the Spirit. Not much of a description there is it?

And yet, it is the Spirit that is sent to us, comes upon us as breath and tongues of fire, that gathers us all together, even when we are apart. It is the same Spirit that fell upon Christ as a dove in his baptism. This same Spirit Jesus promised would be our advocate, our helper for when he is no longer physically present with us. This One who will remind us of all Christ has taught, will continue to connect us to God the Father and Christ the Son. This is the same Spirit that connects us now even as we can't gather together.

It's the same Spirit that is holding you in your grief that holds me, too, the same Spirit that rejoices in your joy as it does with others. This same Spirit that is guiding us, nurturing us, healing us, comforting us, and loving us is the same one first breathed upon the earth at creation and set loose upon those first gathered over 2000 years ago. It is holding not just us as a congregation together but holds everyone, the church across the world as well as the saints of all times and places. This same Spirit connects us to the faithful who have come before us. And as it gathered and guided, healed and love, comforted and nurtured, and helped the faithful believers of our past, we can certainly trust that this Spirit is still with us now, providing for us in similar ways to help us get through this difficult time.

So yes, I do grieve that we still can't be together, that we can't be gathered this Pentecost to celebrate the gathering of the past, this festival day, but I also trust no matter what, nothing can stop the coming of the Spirit. Closed doors, shut and locked can't stop the Spirit. Doubting and questioning can't stop the Spirit. Grieving what was lost, wondering what is next can't stop the Spirit. Even this virus causing us not to be able to gather together can't stop the Spirit. For the Spirit is already on the loose, moving and breathing, blowing and flying around us, among us, and holding us. And for this we say alleluia, amen.



Good News Gazette

First
Presbyterian
Church of
Chester, NY
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Chester, NY
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If you have an article or announcement you would like to have in the next newsletter, please have it into the church office by June 22nd.

Pastor Erin's email address is:
erinmoore@chespresny.com

Pastor Erin's cell phone: 862-432-7467, please limit use to 9-6pm Sun-Thurs unless there is an emergency.

Fundraising Plans – all on hold. Any other/new ideas please share with Pastor or Session.

Summer Sermon Series

This summer our sermon series will be “Summer at the Movies” (for at least part of the summer) and with this series we will be virtually sharing our pulpit. This time of worshiping online has opened up some opportunities for us that otherwise wouldn't be possible. For example, this summer we will share our pulpit with other PCUSA pastors as well as United Methodist, Disciples of Christ, and Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. About 4-5 Sundays this summer we will hear the word proclaimed by someone not only possibly outside our denomination but outside of our immediate area. They will come to us from Nebraska, Arizona, and South Jersey to name a few. We don't always get the opportunity to hear from other voices in our weekly worship and so we will take advantage of this time to invite other voices into our pulpit. 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).

Capital Campaign Update

As of May 26th we have \$19,806 raised towards the capital campaign! We hope to be able to continue with the needed projects now that some of the restrictions for construction have been lifted. If so, we will include pictures in our next newsletter with whatever work might have taken place. Hopefully, new sanctuary steps and re-finished food pantry steps. 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!

B&G Update:

One compromised pine was removed by the manse as a donation to the church. What a blessing! However, we still have three other pine trees along the side of the manse that need to be removed. B&G will continue to see what can be done at an affordable rate.

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!

Denominational News

As mentioned last month, for the first time ever there will be a virtual General Assembly this year. It was just announced on April 21st and will be quite different and adapted from regular General Assemblies of our denomination in the past. General Assembly will begin with opening worship and the election of the moderators of the Assembly on June 19th. There will be optional bible studies on June 24th during the and two days of plenary/business sessions on June 26-27th. This will only be essential business which include

legal and fiscal responsibilities, as well as those core to the continuity of function for agencies and mid councils between now and the assembly scheduled for 2022, will be considered in online plenary sessions. More information can be found online at ga-pcusa.org. If you do not have access to this website and would like more information, please contact Pastor Erin (who will also be a commissioner for our Presbytery for this General Assembly).

Grant News

Since our last newsletter update we have found out we were awarded two separate grants. The first comes from our presbytery, a \$3000 challenge to change grant. This grant is for outreach and mission into our community. We had a list of projects to consider in ways we could better reach our community. Due to the pandemic, some of these needs to be re-addressed and re-considered. If you have any ideas about outreach into our community during this time, please speak with Pastor Erin. Any and all ideas are welcome as we find ways to reallocate funds for projects we will no longer be able to do safely at this time.

The second grant comes to us from our Synod, a \$10,000 grant for our new partnership with the Village of Chester Arts Association to help support the arts in Chester. If you remember, a number of years back we received a grant from our presbytery to help with this when we were re-envisioning our old chapel space with Tom Weigel in hopes of having poetry slams and art galleries. This all went on the back burner for awhile, but we are thankful to say it hasn't fizzled out completely. Now with the newly formed Village of Chester Arts Association, we are going to partner with different projects and ideas to support the arts in our community. Of course, some of this is on hold until it is safe to gather again, but stay tuned for updates! We are very excited for the possibilities to partner with such a great group!

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.

Second Offering

Our second offering for May was for the PCUSA Pentecost Offering. If you missed contributing you can still do so in June as we only just celebrated Pentecost May 31st. Please see the bulletin insert for more information about how this offering is used solely for the faith formation of the youth.

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:

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

Returning to Worship (looking ahead)

We are following NYS guidelines (along with CDC, guidance from our Presbytery) which has churches in phase 4 for full re-opening. However, we might be able to partially re-open in phase 3 with potentially holding outdoor worship among other ideas Session is in discernment about all of these possibilities. Right now, there are a lot of things to consider and we are not rushing to any decisions. Guidelines, at times, change daily as well as new reports coming not only from across our country but across the globe sharing stories of places of worship reopening and what has worked and what needs to change to keep everyone safe. A few things to note for when we do return to worship together:

1. Masks will be required for everyone.
2. Singing will be on hold until a way to do it safely can be determined (many cases of COVID have been linked to choirs both church and secular). We can look into the possibility of other music options, like the bell choir, if we can assure it is safe to practice.
3. The collection of the offering and the distribution of communion will both look different. Best practices are still being determined but the best is a no touch option for all. This also will be determined for things like bulletins, hymnals (if used), etc...
4. There will be appropriate spacing with certain pews roped off.

We know we still have until beginning of July until we might be able to begin to open the sanctuary again, but we need everyone to begin to understand now that it won't go normal, there will be needed changes to ensure everyone's safety. If you have any concerns to add to this list for Session to consider, please let Pastor Erin or an Elder on Session know. We will continue with online worship moving forward, even when it is safe to gather again.

If you do not have a mask but would need one to return to worship, please let Pastor Erin or a member of Session know so we can make sure to procure the needed mask for worship well ahead of time for you.

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 (blister packs, tubes, bottles, caps, lids, cans, boxes) Cough, cold, flu, sore throat, and nasal care packaging (blister packs, tubes, bottles, spray bottles, caps, lids)

Personal care and foot care packaging (tubes, bottles, caps, lids, plastic packaging)

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

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.

Crafters Corner

Crafters meetings are on hold for the time being, however, please feel free to continue to craft at home! Also, we are continuing to collect:

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 but cannot keep them in your home, please let Pastor Erin know.