



Weekly News at Paw Creek

January 14, 2021

Paw Creek Presbyterian Church

From the Pastor...

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Available 11am Monday

Dear Paw Creek,

It is yet another tumultuous week. We continue to hear news of our national government unlike anything we have seen before, and I know that whatever our thoughts on those developments, we all pray for peace and calm to prevail between now and the beginning of the new presidential administration in six days. May God be with us all!

Closer to home, the anticipated post-holiday surge of Covid-19 cases seems to have set in, with daily records of infections, hospitalizations and - sadly - deaths. We learn the names of increasing numbers of the sick in our weekly gathering of prayers and in our conversations in church and in the community. And with each new name, we pray again in sorrow and in concern. Mecklenburg County on Tuesday issued a "directive" (not mandatory but strongly urged) that throughout the community we should endeavor to operate in "full virtual" mode as much as possible for the next three weeks. In response to this directive, Session's Task Force on in-person worship met on Wednesday and, with Session approval last night, has the following report:

The Task Force and Session still feel that our precautions for in-person worship are strong and that we are able to gather in a safe environment. At the same time, given the rapid spread of disease, we must all be extra-vigilant during the next few weeks. We also feel that it is important for us as good citizens of the community, and as a church that sets an example for the community, to honor the well-reasoned directives of our public officials and especially the heroic efforts of medical personnel. With those considerations in mind, there will be a few changes to our worship plans.

The worship service for this coming Sunday, January 17, will be both in-person and live stream. This will allow us to move forward with the service of ordination and installation for our new elders, to welcome some wonderful music that Mark has planned with guest oboist Evan Thee, and to accommodate as much as possible our members who do not have access that allows them to participate in live stream worship from home. Although the service will be open to everyone who is currently signed up to be in the sanctuary, if you are not in one of those special categories, **we ask that you strongly consider staying home on the 17th to minimize the number of people in the sanctuary and allow more room to spread out for those who need to be there.**

The worship services for January 24 and January 31 will be live stream only. This change will allow us to follow the County's directive for the bulk of the three-week "full virtual" period. We all hope and pray that with all of us working together throughout the community, the post-holiday surge will be broken. As we get closer to February the Task Force and Session will monitor the situation and make decisions about when we can return to in-person worship, and will communicate that information as quickly as we have it.

With those arrangements in place, I'd like to take a minute to reflect on our plans for worship on the 17th. The Service of Ordination and Installation of elders is something that is unique to our Reformed/Presbyterian tradition. I've always thought that it is truly one of the glories of our church, and I look forward to this worship service every year. As we call forward women and men from among the congregation, chosen by the work of the Holy Spirit moving in the vote of the people, to set them apart for service, we are acting out our conviction that God uses all of us to spread the Gospel. There is no voice of an elite that determines our work, but only the voice of God speaking in the deliberations of our leaders. When our elders stand to take their vows of service, they answer the same "Constitutional Questions" that are used by Ministers of Word and Sacrament, indicating that our ministries are equal, and all are dedicated to God. I've reprinted the Questions at the end of today's letter - why not take a moment to read through them again and be reminded of the promises that our new elders will undertake on Sunday.

For me, the highlight of the ordination service is always the moment when ordained elders and ministers leave their pews and come forward to lay their hands on the newly ordained, signifying the Holy Spirit's presence in their ministry. The laying of hands is attested in the stories of Moses and the Book of the Acts as an ancient symbol of God's claim on our lives. The powerful image of so many women and men coming forward, each one an elder already ordained to this ministry, reminds us of how widely God has spread the task of leadership in the church.

Unfortunately, this year there will be no streaming forward of elders, as we practice the now-familiar safety of social distancing. But there will be a laying on of hands. The elders to be ordained will each have an ordained family member present to stand with them and represent the hands of all who cannot safely be there this year. And all the rest of our elders, whether in the sanctuary or at home, will be invited to raise their hands to join in the blessing, for it is tradition that God's blessing may be symbolized for one person near-by through the laying of hands, or for many people at a distance through the raising of hands, as in the benediction at the end of a worship service. It will surely be the most odd ordination service we have ever seen, but not less powerful for that. It will be a sign to us all that God's plans for us, as a church and as a human family, will never be stopped.

Turning now to our prayers this week, let us all join the apostle Paul to "pray without ceasing" for the peace and safety of our country, for the health and recovery of those who are ill, and the comfort of God's everlasting arms for those who mourn. And we add these special prayers raised in our community this week:

- We are grateful for the news that Mrs. Sue Matthews, Ron's mother, has been released from the hospital after her struggle with Covid-19, and we pray for her continued and swift recovery.
- We join Austin Edwards and his family in prayers for his friend Jasmine Ruff, a lung-transplant recipient with cystic fibrosis who has contracted Covid-19 and is in ICU care with a ventilator.
- There is an update on Lillian Joy and her roommate in nursing care, both positive with Covid-19 but now showing no symptoms of the illness. Prayers for their swift and complete recovery.
- Frances Lyerly asks our prayers for the complete recovery of her sister Judy Hinson after successful surgery yesterday to repair a broken ankle.
- Amy McGee asks our strong prayers for her friend Steve Ryle and his family - his wife Dede and children Brittany and Steven - he suffered a serious heart attack and is intubated in hospital care.

In these and so many other ways, may God's goodness descend upon us today and always,

The Constitutional Questions for the Ordination and Installation of Elders

To the elders-elect:

Do you trust in Jesus Christ your Savior, acknowledge him Lord of all and Head of the Church, and through him believe in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

Do you accept the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be, by the Holy Spirit, the unique and authoritative witness to Jesus Christ in the Church universal, and God's Word to you?

Do you sincerely receive and adopt the essential tenets of the Reformed faith as expressed in the confessions of our church as authentic and reliable expositions of what Scripture leads us to believe and do, and will you be instructed and led by those confessions as you lead the people of God?

Will you fulfill your office in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture, and continually guided by our confessions?

Will you be governed by our church's polity, and will you abide by its discipline? Will you be a friend among your colleagues in ministry, working with them, subject to the ordering of God's Word and Spirit?

Will you in your own life seek to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, love your neighbors, and work for the reconciliation of the world?

Do you promise to further the peace, unity and purity of the church?

Will you seek to serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love?

Will you be a faithful ruling elder, watching over the people, providing for their worship, nurture, and service? Will you share in government and discipline, serving in councils of the church, and in your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?

To the congregation:

Do we, the members of the church, accept these disciples as ruling elders, chosen by God through the voice of this congregation to lead us in the way of Jesus Christ? We do.

Do we agree to encourage them, to respect their decisions, and to follow as they guide, serving Jesus Christ who alone is Head of the Church? We do.

Scripture Reading

John 1: 43-51

Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth." Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" Nathanael asked him, "Where did you get to know me?" Jesus answered, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you." Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Jesus answered, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these." And he said to him, "Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

Hymn 69

"I, the Lord of Sea and Sky"

*I, the Lord of sea and sky, I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin my hand will save.
I, who made the stars of night, I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear my light to them? Whom shall I send?
Here I am, Lord, Is it I, Lord? I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord, if you lead me. I will hold your people in my heart.*

*I, the Lord of snow and rain, I have borne my people's pain.
I have wept for love of them. They turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak my word to them. Whom shall I send?
Here I am, Lord, Is it I, Lord? I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord, if you lead me. I will hold your people in my heart.*

Sermon

Under the Fig Tree

Ordination and Installation of Elders for the Class of 2023

Celia Gray and Sam McCord, to be ordained and installed
Peggy Harrington and Barbara Ullem to be installed

Offertory

Gabriel's Oboe

Ennio Morricone

Offerings for God's work through Paw Creek Church are gratefully received in the baskets by the entrance and exits to the sanctuary, or by mail to the church office.

Prayers of God's People

Beginning with announcements and prayer concerns; and concluding with *The Lord's Prayer*

Hymn 852

“When the Lord Redeems the Very Least”

When the Lord redeems the very least, we will rejoice.

When the hungry gather for the feast, we will rejoice.

We will rejoice with gladness, we will rejoice.

All our days we'll sing to God in praise. We will rejoice.

When the Lord restores the sick and weak, we will rejoice.

When the earth is given to the meek, we will rejoice.

We will rejoice with gladness, we will rejoice.

All our days we'll sing to God in praise. We will rejoice.

When the Lord returns in victory, we will rejoice.

When we live in glorious liberty, we will rejoice.

We will rejoice with gladness, we will rejoice.

All our days we'll sing to God in praise. We will rejoice.

Charge and Benediction

Vocal Postlude

The Lord Bless You and Keep You

John Rutter

*Elliott Hipp, Pastor • Mark Burluson, Pianist • Patrick McCarthy, Director of Music/Soloist
Clint Shaw, Video and Streaming • Members of the Task Force for In-person Worship, Arrangements*

Guest Oboist - Evan Thee



Dear Paw Creek,

I just wanted to thank everyone for the sympathy cards, food, calls, and prayers during this difficult time. I appreciate my church family who has cared and encouraged me through the years.

Blessings,
Jo G. Small

I want to thank everyone at Paw Creek for all your prayers, thoughts and well wishes for me during my recent surgery and recovery. I am doing great, and just wanted you all to know that. Someday, when this pandemic is behind us, I hope to see you again. In the meantime, I hope one of my favorite quotes will help each of you through this difficult time in our lives. "Do all that you can, with all that you have, in the time that you have, in the place where you are."

My love to all of you,

Carol McNeill

We want to give a big Thank You to our church family. Thanks for all the prayers, well wishes and food during Pop's illness. These really helped a lot and kept our spirits up.

God Bless,

Vickie, Libby and Lynn

Paw Creek Presbyterian Church

P.O. BOX 64
Paw Creek, NC 28130-0064

Seek..... Matthew 6:33
Serve 1 Samuel 12:24
Praise..... Psalm 111:1
Love Christ!.....1 John 4:12

Lord, we thank you for...

Have a Prayer Request? To put someone on our prayer chain, obtain permission from the person or family involved, then call:
Judy Smith (704) 392-2892
-or-
Ann Cashion (704) 301-0126

Know someone Who Needs a Visit? Please contact the Church Office or Rev. Elliott Hipp (704) 392-0329

Online Giving

Paw Creek has now implemented Online Giving for the convenience of church members and our friends who worship with us. Please go to our website at www.pawcreekpc.org and follow the link on the home page.



Once you click on this link, you will be directed to set up an account. You may make this gift as a one time transaction, or you can set up recurring payments. You may use your bank account information to create this payment, or you may use your debit or credit card. (If you use your debit or credit card, you will also be given the option to add the transaction fee to your payment if you choose to do so)



For those who like to use mobile apps, you can download the app: Give+ and search for Paw Creek Presbyterian Church. Once you have created an account, it will save Paw Creek as your default Church.

Upcoming Sermon Titles

Sunday, January 17

John 1: 43-51
"Under the Fig Tree"

Sunday, January 31

Mark 1: 21-28
"Come to Destroy?"

Sunday, January 24

Mark 1: 14-20
"By the Lakeshore"

Sunday, February 7

Celebration of the Lord's Supper
Mark 1: 29-39
"Message to Share"