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The Spire



seattle first baptist

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Submissions for the Spire are due by the 20th of the month prior.

All submissions should be sent to editor@seattlefirstbaptist.org

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by Darren Hochstedler

During this time of Governor Inslee's "Stay Home, Stay Healthy" executive order, SFBC is working hard to ensure that we continue our community life together even as we follow the best directives of medical personnel, our government leaders, and our own leadership. In light of this, for the time being, all church office functions have been transferred offsite. Mail is still being processed. Deposits are being made, checks requests are being processed and all pastors and key staff members will continue to check email and voicemail remotely. We have been working hard to ensure that people remain connected and engaged while we are unable to be physically present in our historic building.

*"Loved it earlier; love it even more with the many beautiful faces!
Thank you everyone who helped make this possible.
I love the concept Patricia mentioned of Community in Diaspora.
Our community grows in strength and we weather this storm together. "*
-Online Church Participant

Craig, our caretaker, lives on site and will maintain the essential functions of the building including security; however, he will not be answering the buzzer or allowing anyone in the building. Door entry codes are being suspended during this time for all church members. If you need entry to the building, please contact darren@seattlefirstbaptist.org.

We continue to process both online giving and checks via mail. While we know that everyone's circumstances are different in this season of financial uncertainty, we stand ready to help you set up online giving or answer your questions about giving at this time. All electronic giving change requests can be processed remotely, and we are able to receive any donation checks in the mail.

We are committed to continue to respond to your spiritual and physical needs during this time. Please make sure to get in touch if you have any needs. Please e-mail contact@seattlefirstbaptist.org and your e-mail will be routed to the appropriate staff.

We are praying for our congregation and community and looking forward to the time we will all be together again.

Holy Week at a Glance

Maundy Thursday

Observe Maundy Thursday with SFBC by joining a Zoom call at 6pm on April 9. This will be a family friendly service where you are invited to eat dinner while we share about Jesus' final days together. Zoom meeting code will be sent out next week and posted on the website.

Good Friday

At 5 p.m. Join Pastor Anita for a Family Friendly exploration of this remembrance.

Adult Evening Service at 7 p.m.

Even as we have to spend our time turning away from physical contact, our current invitation is to turn our mindfulness, our thoughts, and our concern toward our world. What we face in Seattle is a struggle, even as brothers and sisters, beloved Children of God, face different challenges and struggles in different parts of our shared world. This evening's service will invite us to Turn Toward the World in compassion, in grief, and in an awareness that often, in order to come to the Resurrection, we cannot avoid the darkness and shadow of our world, but face it and walk through it together

Easter Sunday

The first experience of Easter was an empty tomb. Before the hallelujahs and Christ-is-risen there was shock and utter loss of an empty tomb. The life that rises out of emptiness is what we call "resurrection." Please join us online for what may be the most unique celebration of Easter in our 150 years of life together. See Luke 24:1-12 and Philippians 2:1-13.



seattle first baptist

Liberating the Heart ♥ Engaging the Mind
Embracing the World

Continuing Community Online

Noontime Prayer and Reflection Online with Pastor Patricia

Tuesdays and Thursdays at noon on Zoom

We are going through challenging times due to the COVID-19 virus. It is hard being away from our SFBC friends who share their love with us and give us strength. So, you are invited to "gather" in prayer for a few minutes with others of our community, on Tuesdays and Thursdays at noon. Pastor Patricia will lead us in prayer and share a word of hope and encouragement.

Zoom Information for Noontime Prayer and Reflection:

You may join us using this Zoom link on your computer: <https://zoom.us/j/112959479>

You may also join us by phone by calling this number 1-669-900-9128.

Or dial by your location: 1 253 215 8782 US
The meeting ID is: 112 959 479

Contact Pastor Patricia if you have questions.

Story Time with Pastor Anita

Tuesdays and Thursdays at 7pm on Zoom

Join Pastor Anita for a special story time for our SFBC families. We will meet together on Zoom.

Please contact Pastor Anita at anita@seattlefirstbaptist.org for the link.

Friday Fun-Day!

11 a.m. Interwebs Dance Party
4:30 p.m. Virtual Happy Hour

Let's say "Fri-YAY!" together as we dance in the morning and kick back with whatever beverage you're pouring at home. Zoom links will be sent via Weekly Email.

Bible Study with Pastor Tim

Wednesdays at 12pm on Zoom

We will continue our Lenten conversations on the Psalms starting with Psalm 73. Have your Bible handy and feel free to eat lunch while we talk for 45 minutes or so.

<https://zoom.us/j/635299625> Meeting ID: 635 299 625

One tap mobile:

+16699009128,,635299625# US (San Jose)

+13462487799,,635299625# US (Houston)

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Dealing with Anxiety

by Anita Peebles

Friends, there is a lot of anxiety right now. Humans generally like to be in control, and right now there are a lot of unknowns. As we shelter in place, we don't know how long we will have to do this. We don't know what will happen with rent, student loans, utilities, internet access. We can't visit our families, particularly those with delicate immune systems. We're not sure how long we will be out of school/work/church.

And at the same time, there are things we know. This is not forever. Things change. God always loves you. Love and community transcend boundaries of space and time. There are many learned experts working very hard on keeping us all safe. Each of us can take responsibility for ourselves as we wash our hands, sanitize, stay inside, and follow Public Health precautions.

I offer the following as exercises to calm anxiety:

- **Breath Prayer.** Pick a calming phrase, like Julian of Norwich's "All shall be well" or the Taize chorus "Bless the Lord my soul." Breathe in deeply through your nose as you think of this phrase. Let your breath out through your mouth slowly. As you do this, remember how God breathed life into the first human and how God animated the dry bones in Ezekiel.
- **Light a candle.** Focus on how the flame flickers.
- **As you wash your hands,** which we are all doing quite often, say a prayer or a poem or hum a tune. The Lord's Prayer or the Prayer of Saint Francis or Wendell Berry's "The Peace of Wild Things" are great for this.
- **Make a list of people and places and things you are grateful for.** It doesn't need to be profound. A comfy pillow and a ripe peach and a warm spring breeze are good candidates for this list. Try doing this each day, naming at least one thing for which you give thanks.
- **Lay flat on your back.** Let yourself breathe deeply, imagining sinking into the floor, or your bed, or your couch, or whatever you are laying on. Feel the ground supporting you, pushing back on you as gravity acts by tethering you to the earth. You are not alone. You are supported.



- **Make time each day to do something you enjoy.** Move your body. Let yourself laugh. Be kind to your body and your mind. Color a picture. Take a walk. Wave to a neighbor. Snuggle a pet. Do a puzzle. Whatever it is that allows your brain to rest, do that thing.
- **Make an altar space in your home.** If you have children or pets around, make it children- or pet-friendly. Collect items for your altar that have that many call God or the Divine. As you pass this location in your daily routine, walk slowly by it and use it as a moment to pause. This is a sacred space, as are you.

And, as always, know your pastors are here for you. We are grateful for the opportunity to accompany you through whatever you are thinking and feeling and experiencing.

Keep in touch. We love you.



“ Even from our living room, I feel the beloved home of SFBC. Hope to see you all again soon. Thank you. ”

-Online Church Participant

5 Illness and Spirituality

By Pastor Tim Phillips

Historically, religious communities don't have a very good track record when it comes to illness, with responses like:

-Real believers do not suffer, so illness indicates a failure in your spiritual life (oddly coming from both conservative religious folks and from some modern health-as-state-of-mind gurus)

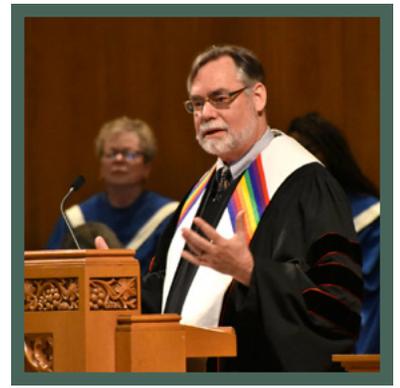
-Illness is an illusion – just get over it (my favorite unhelpful response).

Where these responses go wrong, I think, is that they are born out of privilege and underlying prejudice. These responses only get worse when

they are used to blame others – gay men, Africans, the Chinese, the Italians, immigrants, etc. Illness in the hands of the privileged and the prejudiced becomes really sick.

Watching all the current responses to COVID-19, I went back to the wisdom of others during the AIDS pandemic. I am re-reading John Fortunato's AIDS the Spiritual Dilemma, published in 1987, but all too familiar now:

"It doesn't matter from what angle you look: AIDS is a terrible thing. And it is going to be with us for a long time. Even if a vaccine were developed tomorrow, the number of people already infected is enormous. Even if a cure were found today, the number of dead is great, and the effect on all those whose lives indirectly have been touched by this dreadful illness will last for decades. How can we bear the pain of this development in world history? How can we deal with AIDS and not either engage full-scale denial or be immobilized? It is my conviction that the only way out is to go deeper. "



This could be today's news. What Fortunato argues is that illness is not separate from spirituality. It, and our response to it, is spiritual. He says: "By spiritual I am referring to that aura around all our lives that gives what do we meaning, the human striving toward meaning, the search for a sense of belonging."

Inasmuch as AIDS asks us to consider meaning and belonging, it has everything to do with our spiritual lives. And we have wisdom among us to help on this new journey with COVID-19.

The Rev. Dr. Renee McCoy, Pastor Patricia's spouse, has been an HIV/AIDS activist and educator since the pandemic surfaced in 1981. Upon reflecting on the spiritual connectedness between HIV/AIDS and the current COVID-19 situation she responded:

"The HIV/AIDS pandemic carried all of us to a place of groaning and yearning for the active presence of a power higher than ourselves. We felt surrounded by an emerging fissure of despair, suffocated by a sudden loss of meaning and direction. Everything familiar and dear became suspect. Touching became toxic; loving suddenly became deadly. In the midst of that global chaos, however, the breath of God whispered messages of hope and commissioned us to truly become a community beloved. During the early years of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, Paul's words in Romans 8:19 frequently resounded within my being: "Creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed." Millions have survived that disease for more than three decades because many, many, many children of God revealed themselves as healers, advocates, comforters, friends, neighbors, and believers in the possibilities and power of love and community. We survived HIV/AIDS because we declared God's faithfulness in spite of delusions of abandonment. We stood up and revealed the presence of God through service to and with one another. We hoped. We trusted. We showed ourselves powerful and capable of embracing victory when it looked like all hope was gone."....

(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

...“The challenge before us today is to remember God’s promise to be with us through whatever valleys we encounter and trust God’s pledge of abundant joy and fulfillment when we leave those places. We are called to remember that because God did it – whatever “it” is in our lives – then God is still able and will do it now. HIV/AIDS reminds me to recognize the faithfulness of God and expect the Spirit of God to flood our lives with radical comfort and healing even in times like these.”

Cherry Johnson, a social worker who also served our community in those early days says:

The AIDS pandemic taught me that fear is just a cover-story hiding the truth. I learned that we are all storytellers with a treasure-trove of tales gleaned from a lifetime (be it nine years or ninety), and that we choose at any given moment which stories to tell ourselves and others – the stories that intensify sadness or the stories that induce laughter, the stories that remind us we are weak or the ones that reinforce how resilient we are, the stories of doom or the stories of hope. And it taught me that when others cannot find their way to hope, we can hold the hope for them, and listen to their despair with love. Not trying to fix what cannot be fixed. Just listening. Just being. Just loving. Because we all share the common story of coming into this life as sacred ones birthed from the great Mystery. One family. One.

These voices help us orient ourselves in the middle of this crisis. Thank God for them. And for you. John Fortunato says that: “The spiritual journey, dilemma, and opportunity just described are by no means the exclusive property of the gay community [as AIDS also taught us]. We are all in one way or another, in exile. We are all “not home.” And so we keep singing in these weeks, “Bring us home ... to the place of our belonging.” May it be so.



Keeping Connected by Katie Sturm

We are certainly living in a brand new world right now! I am aware that the technology learning curve can feel very steep, and it may feel “disconnected” as we try to move so much “connection” into digital and online spaces. I want you to know that we are doing everything we can to remain accessible for as many people as possible. For all of our Zoom calls, there is always a telephone dial-in option. If you have been unable to connect to mid-day prayer or other Zoom gatherings, please email us at contact@seattlefirstbaptist.org to get the dial-in number and meeting ID for the gathering that you’d wish to attend.

Keep an eye on our Weekly Email, as well as our website, as our information changes rapidly and regularly as we listen to our officials and try to navigate the increasing bandwidth issues as so much of our country - and world - begins to move themselves into digital spaces.

We miss our brick & mortar spaces, but remember that this, too, shall pass. As Julian Norwich says, “All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.” While we may not have predicted this adventure together, our pastors have definitely been preparing in advance of each step, and our team is working to ensure that these technology developments are both sustainable and not a permanent replacement for our beloved in-person gatherings.

Please don’t be intimidated by doing virtual worship, Bible study or small groups through Zoom! It probably is easier than you think! Check out our helpful “[Join Us Online](#)” web page and [Facebook post](#) with some Zoom tips. You all are keeping up exceptionally well!

7 Grief in the Time of COVID-19

By Pastor Patricia L. Hunter

Our Christian faith encourages us to be grateful for every new day and that every day is a gift from God. While this is true, you may also be thinking that life right now is a chaotic mess! Life with COVID-19 in no way resembles life pre-COVID-19. There is a layer of tension in the atmosphere that all of us can feel. Children are anxious and missing school while others are sheltered in place. And, who knows how long all this will last? Our hands are dry as paper from washing them so often and we are missing our hugs from our loved ones. Nothing is like it used to be!



Most of us have moments when all the changes due to COVID-19 are more than our spirits can take. In those moments, we are sad and grieve the life we had just three short weeks ago. Yes, we know life will eventually get back to normal — albeit a new normal. Knowing we may have to self-isolate for another two months and not see our loved ones feels unbearable.

Yes, we are grieving and how we manage our sadness and grief varies. Some will sleep more, while others feel less motivated. Some will be a bit more teary than usual, while others may be irritable and harder to live with.

While it may be tempting to eat, drink, or shop more (online of course), it is important to realize those coping strategies will backfire. The relief we feel will only be for a moment, then the sadness will return along with a higher credit card bill.

It is important to be honest about our feelings during these changes. We are grieving life as we knew it. Our feelings will change depending on the day, or perhaps even the hour of the day. We may even go from sad to scared, to angry all with a few minutes! It is OK, and even healthy, to feel the loss and acknowledge the emotional pain and inconvenience.

It is easy to see that life with COVID-19 looks like the glass is half empty. But, if the glass is half empty, it is also half full. So, are there any moments of grace in this chaos? Where are your life lessons in this changing universe?

I believe we can find joy in the chaotic mess. Catching up on needed sleep could be a blessing in disguise. Not going out to lunch and dinner might be the ticket to saving a bit more money. Being forced to shelter in place because of underlying health conditions, may be the green light to work on your art, or household projects and repairs. The joy of this slow season could be you have the luxury of time to work on your relationship with your beloved and time to work on your relationship with God. This is a hard time, but it is also a sacred time. God is near. Listen to what the Spirit has to say even amid COVID-19.

*“ Thanks, Seattle First Baptist,
for holding church online...Tuning in
from Geneva, Switzerland.. “*



Planning Team to Host Focus Groups

By Jim Segaar

In today's virus-crazed society, many of us are not sure what this afternoon or tomorrow will bring in terms of drastic changes to our individual and collective lives. And yet, we are doing our best to keep living our lives in whatever ways we can. Like you, members of the Long Range Planning Team are staying home and sheltering in place. And we are continuing our work to help guide Seattle First Baptist forward in the coming years.

In January, valuable discussions happened at the Leadership Retreat when members of the Diaconate were asked to imagine what life at SFBC will be like in 5 years, 25 years, and 50 years if we make no changes in how we do church together.

Will we be Thriving, Worried, Well, Struggling, Failing, or Non-Existent?

Place at the Table Dinners March

Seven hosts signed up to welcome guests into their homes for the most recent Place at the Table dinners. Despite the unfolding events with the Coronavirus, 3 dinners were held with 20 folks enjoying a potluck meal together. All hosts report having a wonderful evening. We are looking forward to the next time when we will be able to share a meal together.

Then people reflected together on their worries and fears about the future, what is most significant about our faith community, and what things about our church we would miss the most if they were discontinued or changed significantly. The discussion was rich, and we learned a lot.

Our planning team wants to continue these discussions with more members of our faith community. In late April and May, we will host a series of Focus Groups. We will bring about 10 people together at a time so we can have a rich discussion. Originally, we planned

to have these groups meet in person, but we have decided to go ahead with our timeline and use Zoom or whatever means make sense at the time to meet as focus groups.

What do you imagine life at SFBC will be like in 5, 25, or 50 years? What are your hopes and fears for our collective future? Please let us know if you would like to participate in a Focus Group to share your thoughts with us. Email us at planning@seattlefirstbaptist.org if you would like to participate. We will meet on several dates and times, and will keep you informed as we firm up specific dates, times and other details.

Thank you for continuing to support Seattle First Baptist in these uncertain times. And thank you for helping us prepare as best we can for the years ahead.

Community Engagement: (AKA: Love-In-Action): COVID- 19 Resource Tool

To Read/See:

- “Social Distance Is a Social Justice Issue”
Read the article at <https://www.gq.com/story/social-distance-is-a-social-justice-issue>
- Explore the National Association of Social Workers’ Coronavirus page: <https://www.socialworkers.org/Practice/Infectious-Diseases/Coronavirus>

To Pray:

Dearest Spirit of Love and Connection, until we can convene again in person, help us to protect and care for one another. Give us wisdom and courage to follow safety directives of scientists, health professionals, therapists, and first responders. Help us to support our neighbors by sheltering in place and taking good care of the precious bodies you gave us. And help us to manage our fear through action, doing all that we can for and with your children who have no place to call home, phoning your lonely ones, shopping for your fragile ones. May we remember every waking hour to be grateful for one another and for all of creation.

To Do/Go:

- Donate Blood. Blood Works NW reports that the closures of high schools and colleges have reduced donations by 25%. Blood drives also cannot continue at people’s places of business, many of which are closed for safety. Although some hospitals are postponing elective surgeries, there will always be a need for blood. Make an appointment to donate: www.bloodworksnw.org
- Stay home as much as you can, but if you are going to buy groceries or pick up to-go food, patronize an Asian-owned business. They are suffering even more than other businesses during this pandemic due, at least in part, to xenophobic ignorance. Get your to-go meals at a Chinatown-International District restaurant. Get your groceries an Asian market. Help them stay afloat. Politicians and others are using racial slurs in connection with this coronavirus. We at SFBC object.
- Donate funds or volunteer your time for the COVID-19 response of The COVID-19 Mutual Aid Solidarity Network. They drop food at the doors of folks in the Seattle Area who are “sick, disabled, quarantined without pay, elderly, undocumented, queer, Black, Indigenous, and/or people of color.” Google “Mutual Aid Solidarity Network”.
- Donate to Seattle Foundation’s COVID-19 Rapid Response Fund, which will rapidly deploy resources to community-based organizations at the frontlines of the coronavirus outbreak in the Puget Sound region. Go to www.SeattleFoundation.org
- Express your support for federal legislation: Voter suppression always targets the most marginalized among us. COVID-19 is no excuse for targeting anyone. Senators Murray, Wyden, and Klobuchar are trying to run a bill that will launch a national emergency vote-by-mail system. Tell them why you support that.
Drop at postcard addressed: The Honorable (Name), United States Senate, Washington, D.C. 20510 ... Dear Senator (Name). Or call them: Patty Murray (202) 224-2621, Ron Wyden (202) 224-5244, Amy Klobuchar (202) 224-3244.

Congregants Serving One Another

Your Name _____

Your Phone _____

___ I need help with ___ I can offer help with

- ___ picking up groceries, medicine, or something else
- ___ a ride to the doctor, to avoid public transportation
- ___ a check-in phone call every day or two
- ___ a little financial help because of COVID-19
- ___ something else:

Please cut and paste this form into an email to Ruth Fossett, Co-Chair of the Outreach Commission, who has agreed to coordinate your requests and offers: RuthFossett@yahoo.com
PUT THE WORD "HELP" OR THE WORD "OFFER" OR "BOTH" IN THE SUBJECT LINE. Rest assured that all requests and offers will be held in complete confidentiality.

Feedback For Your SFBC Outreach Commission:

You can email: bethreishome@gmail.com with "OUTREACH" in the subject line. Or give your feedback about the monthly Community Engagement Tools to any of these folks who serve on your Outreach Commission: Ruth Fossett, Catherine Fales, Laura Jorgensen, Beth Reis, Dick Miller, Laurel Henrickson, Carolanne Watness. Thanks.

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