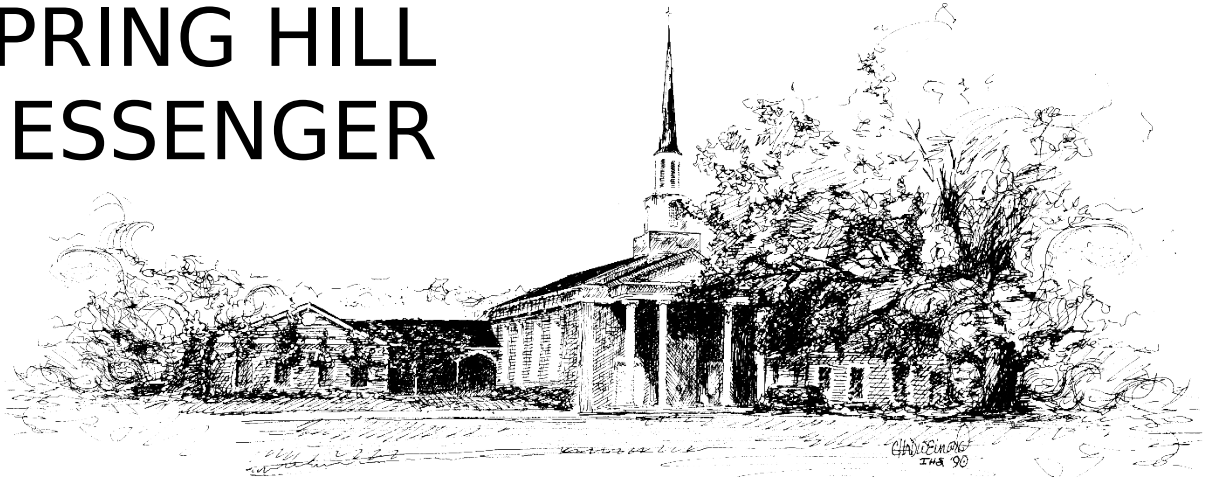


SPRING HILL MESSENGER



Spring Hill Presbyterian Church, Mobile, Alabama

April 2020

DEAR SPRING HILL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH FAMILY,

The Apostle Paul begins his letter to the Philippians with these words: “**For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus.**” (Philippians 1:8) Paul was the founding pastor of the church in Philippi. His circumstances (of imprisonment) prevented him from visiting the Philippians in person, but he **longed** to be with them. So, he sent a letter that carried the spirit of his longing and his compassion and connected them even when they were apart.

In the midst of this COVID-19 crisis, we are all prevented from seeing one another in person, but I know that (just like Paul) we **long** to be with each other. I know particularly that we as your pastors and church staff **long** to be with you. We want to be with you, visiting in your homes; we want to be with you, praying in the hospital; we want to be with you, welcoming you to church with a hug; we want to be with you, hearing your voices singing in praise; we want to be with you, seeing the ways that you guide future generations of disciples in the faith. We miss your presence, so much.

But the truth is, we aren’t missing your care and support...because those are still present. We aren’t missing your prayers...because those are still felt. We aren’t missing your love...because in countless ways, both large and small, this church family has rallied together in this trying time and is finding ways to connect. We truly feel “**the compassion of Christ Jesus**” within this Church, even when we are apart.

As this situation unfolds in the days ahead, I ask that you continue to reach out to one another. Send notes and cards, emails and texts. Make phone calls or Facetime. Share in any (safe) way that you can imagine. A number of people have asked me lately, “Is there anyone you need me to reach out to?” And answer is always the same: “yes, reach out to everyone that you can think of.” Call the people who typically sit next to you in the pew. Call the members of your Sunday School class, Supper Club, PW circle, Bible study, or committees that you serve on. If you are in the chancel choir or handbell choir, call the other singers and ringers. If you are a parent of a youth or child, call the other parents (so you know that they are as stressed by children at home as you are). If you are part of the Yeomen work crew, or Tai Chi class, or Painting Pals, or AA groups, Spiritual Writing group, Stephen Ministers, or any other group at the church you can think of, then reach out to the other members. Call your brothers and sisters in the faith that you think might be particularly lonely and isolated in this time away. Call. Write. Reach out through technology. In short, be the Body of Christ for one another.

These days I’m praying for healing for those who are sick. I’m praying with gratitude for those who provide medical care. I’m praying for our world, nation, state, and city. But I’m also praying that during this time away, when we **long** to be together in person, we might grow deeper into “**the compassion of Christ Jesus.**” This year’s Easter may be

very different, but I know it will still be a joyful celebration of the resurrection, the ultimate act of divine compassion from our God, bringing life to a longing creation.

Grace and Peace,

Buz

A Word from Pastor Anna

Dear Friends,

It has been a strange few weeks! However, what is sustaining me and giving me hope during these times are the ways we are still able to connect. Many things have had to be canceled, postponed, and changed; what is amazing is the resiliency, hope, and faith in the midst of all that is different. On Sunday, I met with the Confirmation class at 9:00 am and the Youth Group at 6:00 pm on Zoom, a virtual platform where you can have conversations through video and phone. Both conversations filled my soul.

During Youth Group, we shared highs and lows, spoke about where we had seen God that week, read Scripture together, and prayed. It gave me so much hope to hear where each of the youth and advisors had seen God. Some saw God through the chalk artwork on their neighborhood sidewalks, moments of peace in stressful days, a scavenger hunt in the windows of the houses in their neighborhood, church online, and just the reminder to be still and take Sabbath in all of this. We read Psalm 46 together. If you have time this week, I invite you to read it as well. The Psalmist talks about how “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” even when the earth changes, mountains shake, waters roar, nations are in an uproar, and kingdoms totter. In the middle of all of the fear and chaos God commands, “Be still and know that I am God!” (Ps. 46:10). God is God, and God is with us.

May we connect to God and one another in the ways that we can: reaching out to one another by phone, praying for one another, worshipping together virtually, reading Scripture, and inspiring hope. I give thanks to God and Jesus Christ who connect us, even when we are apart.

Grace and Peace,

Anna

A Word from Randy: How Shall We Sing the Lord’s Song in a Foreign Land?

Unlike the Psalmist in Psalm 137, we are not captives of a hostile power in a foreign country, but we may feel that we are indeed in a strange sort of captivity. That is certainly the case for us whose lives are normally patterned by the rhythms of meeting together in choirs and ensembles to rehearse music for worship, and to then to sing and play together in those worship services. When our corporate music-making is curtailed by forces beyond our control, how do we continue to sing? What and when and where do we sing? And why?

In last Sunday’s sermon, Buz addressed these questions, asserting that Christians do keep on singing. Whether silently or with our voices, whether in music or poetry or daily speech, work, and play, our lives resonate with the songs of Creation, with songs of our Creator. In the words of 19th century hymn writer Robert Lowry-- “How can I keep from singing?”

During this strange time when we are separated, as the music director of SHPC, I am pondering what new ways there might be of encouraging our singing and our

praying through singing. I anticipate making videos of various kinds and posting them online. Sometimes I may play organ music, which will provide something now missing in our streamed worship services because of the audio limitations of our current streaming technology (limitations that we hope to overcome.) I may recount the history of a hymn's creation. I may actually sing, not as "a soloist," but as one who loves the song and wants to share the pure beauty of its melody. By such sharing, I hope that you will be encouraged to sing in your everyday life--- no matter what you think about your singing- or what others might have told you about it. What's important is just that you sing--- and that is the case when we are again able to gather together in one place.

We sing, even when we are separated and in a strange, foreign land, because we know that all lands and all people are the Lord's and are loved by Him, and thus, we cannot keep from singing.

Grace and Peace,

Randy