



# The Clifton Messenger

Clifton Presbyterian Church

<https://www.cliftonpresbyterianchurch.com>

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May 2020

## A LETTER FROM ED THOMPSON, GENERAL PRESBYTER

Friends,

As I mentioned in my newsletter article back in March suggesting that it was time to stop having in-person worship, I have no authority to tell you what to do. The decision as to whether to stop as well as when to resume in-person worship is up to each session. While I'd like to be able to say that since the government is easing its restrictions, we can just go back to doing worship the way we were before, I can't do that.

Our state government says that groups of 25 or less can now gather. Since the median size of a church in this presbytery according to the 2019 statistical reports is 26 members that would mean most of our churches could safely gather. But it is really safe to go back to doing worship the way we used to do it just yet? I don't think so. Anyway, here are some things I think you need to think about:

-If you typically average 25 people or less in worship, as long as you maintain social distancing and wear face masks, you could begin to gather for worship. That needs to be a session decision. Will you proceed by a simple majority vote, only proceed if it's a 2/3 majority, or will you require a unanimous vote on this?

-If you have groups smaller than 25 people, which for most churches means the session, committees, youth groups, Sunday school classes, PW circles, and Bible studies among others, will you start meeting again in person, as long as you maintain social distancing and wear masks? Again, that's a session decision. Are you going to proceed if it's a simple majority, only proceed if it's a 2/3 majority, or will you require a unanimous vote on this?

-If you do proceed, what kind of cleaning standards will you have both before each meeting as well as after each meeting in your building? There's an old saying, "a lick and a prayer" that could often be applied to church cleaning practices. That's not going to cut it anymore.

-If you have 25 people or less in worship and you decide to meet in person:

- Will you provide face masks for those who don't bring them?
- If people aren't willing to wear face masks, will you ask them to leave?
- How will you designate what pews to sit in? It's been suggested that people sit in every other pew.
- How will you collect the offering? It's probably wise to put the offering plates or a basket to receive offerings at each entrance to the sanctuary, so people don't have to pass them through the pews.
- Will you have bulletins? If so, how will you distribute them? It may be wise to photocopy the scripture readings and hymns to put in the bulletins, so people aren't handling hymnbooks and pew Bibles. It may be wiser to put everything on screens.
- Will you sing hymns? It's been stated that germs can be spread 20 feet while singing. It's also going to be hard to sing wearing a mask.
- Will you have a choir? Can you space them 6 feet (maybe 20 feet) apart? Will it be better to use soloists, duets, or trios? Will you make them wear masks? A strict reading of the government guidelines suggests that's required.
- Will you still do a children's sermon/children's time? Since it's going to be hard to keep children 6 feet apart and/or wear a mask and/or keep them 6 feet away from whoever is leading this, it's probably wise not to include this as a part of worship although I suppose it could be done.
- Getting people into the sanctuary might not be a problem since people don't arrive at the same time. However, everyone leaves at roughly the same time once the service is over. Will you have the pastor or someone else dismiss folks one pew at a time? It would also seem wise not to have a receiving line at the end of the service to shake the pastor's hand. Where can the pastor stand, so people can talk to him/her if they want or need to do that?
- It may be wise to worship in a fellowship hall, or perhaps outside if you have the space, so people can maintain the appropriate distance from one another.

Perhaps my biggest concern, though, comes when I think about the fact that most of the members of our congregations are over 60 years old. Even if they have a lot of energy, that does not make them immune to the coronavirus.

(Con't. on Page 5-Letter)

## Office Ramblings



I have to tell you that these have been the hardest two months in all of my life serving as a minister in the church. Usually there are ways to touch and to deal with the situations around us. When there is sickness, I can make it to the hospital or home when called. When there is a death I can visit and work through the grief with the families. When there are weddings I can spend time with the couple working on what we are doing. When there are celebrations in the church there is the joy of preparing and meeting and getting excited about the worship events.

Now during this Covid-19 period there is nothing that I can really do as it should be done. I cannot plan or visit or contact or see. We cannot meet or look or plan together (believe me on the phone doing Conferencing Calling is just not the same as being there). I miss preaching the sermon while seeing the faces of people who have come to worship. I have decided that it is pretty hard for me to preach to just a camera audience. I am ready to get back to normal when it is time. Are you ready?



We have been truly fortunate as a church with the work that Kereshmeh, Victor and Nima had done for our church before this pandemic. We were using *Facebook Live* every Sunday before others had to do so. While we were doing only the sermon on *Facebook* before the C-19 days, we were able to move pretty smoothly to a full worship event for our members and our friends after the C-19 Stay-in-

place orders. In fact we are starting to think how we can continue to conduct our complete worship services on the internet after this C-19 experience.



The question comes now as to when we come back to the church building, and how do we protect ourselves when we do come back to the building? The Worship Committee and the Session will be working on all of these issues. For now just stay patient.

-Ron

## OUR COVID-19 WORSHIP/ OPERATION

Our church has continued to provide a limited worship service throughout this Covid-19 Shelter-in-Place time. Every Sunday we have provided an opportunity to worship via *Facebook Live*, and we have attempted other methods of connection which have not been as successful as we had hoped but is changing (such is the way with a lot of technology).

The good news is that very soon we are going to be back into the sanctuary with our morning worship. If the parameters remain steady from the Health Department we may actually be together much sooner than later, but we want to make sure that it is not too soon. **A letter and/or notice will be sent to all to remind you when we are fully open again for worship at the Church building, and what will be required of us to gather.**

For sure we know right now that things will be different for some time. We will want to follow all of the orders of and separation and such. Each Sunday the Session will direct what we must do as we strive for this coming together. Right now the Emergency group is working on some methods to get us back soon. Are you ready? I promise you we will only come back as a group with the highest regards to safety for each of you.

A special thanks goes to our Covid-19 Worship Team: To **Julie Gillilan** who faithfully provided music for our Sunday celebrations; To **Houston Arbuckle** who served as the door keeper and director; to **Jim Miller** our Property Chair who helped to make decisions about the opening and closing of the church while helping in worship; To **Larry Davis** for working on alternatives in staying in touch in worship and for committee meetings and the Sunrise Service; To **Paul Jacoby** who helped stage the Sunrise Service; and to **Kereshmeh, Victor and Nima Shahmir** who were able to make sure that every service was sent over Facebook Live; and finally a special thanks again to **Kereshmeh** who not only helped film the services, but she served every Sunday as our Liturgist and Worship Leader. What a help this team has been. Thank each of you also who have patiently supported the church through many ways during this pandemic. We are indeed a Matthew 25 church.

**Session Report for April 5, 2020 by Houston Arbuckle, Clerk of Session**

Due to the Executive Order designed to limit COVID-19 spread, the Session of Clifton Presbyterian Church, Maxwelton, WV, met in a conference call for the stated April meeting on Sunday, April 5, 2020 at 1:00 p.m. Those present by telephone were moderator, Susan Sharp Campbell; temporary pastor, Ron Miller; session members: Venetta Wright, Jim Miller, Suzy Meadows, Carol Hoover, Larry Davis, Teresa Bostic, Kereshmeh Kashefian, Lynne Bostic, and Houston Arbuckle, Clerk of Session.

Moderator, **Susan Sharp Campbell**, opened the meeting with prayer and declared a quorum. The minutes of the March 1, 2020 stated session meeting were approved.

The financial report for February 2020 was received: The General fund showed an excess income of \$4,733.41. The Memorial fund received \$50.00 from donations for use of the Fellowship Hall. Stone Soup took in \$134 from Souper Bowl offering and paid out \$200 for gas cards. This leaves a balance of \$3,503.16

The Clerk reported the average worship attendance for the first two Sundays of March was **38**. For the last two Sundays, by the end of the service, there was an average viewing of **54** on facebook and many more people watch the service later.

**Jim Miller, Chair of the Property Committee**, moved to close the shelter, including restrooms, at the Charlie Mackey Park until the Executive Order is lifted. Jim also moved to give permission to use Clifton's kitchen for the preparation of Gwinn's Meals. Both motions were seconded and passed.

**Lynne Bostic, Chair of the Congregational Care Committee**, reported that she is in the process of updating our "Shepard's List" to include all active members and all on the "Others List" which are part of our fellowship.

**Venetta Wright, Chair of the Worship Committee**, moved to hold Good Friday service, Easter Sunrise Service and Easter 11:00 a.m. service on face-book and Youtube. The motion was seconded and passed. The session canceled the Memorial Lilies, the Maundy Thursday service and Easter communion for 2020 due to the COVID-19 virus.

**Carol Hoover, Chair of the Fellowship**, moved to cancel the Easter Breakfast for this year. This motion also passed.

**Larry Davis, Chair of the Mission Committee** presented the minutes of the Mission Committee meeting on March 29, 2020 by Conference Call with the following participating: **Larry Davis, Teresa Bostic, JoAnne Persinger, Houston Arbuckle, and Ron Miller**. At this meeting the Committee approved a \$500 donation to support the **COVID-19 response** (via their DR000148 account) of the **Presbyterian Disaster Relief Assistance (PDA)** and a \$500 donation the **Greater Greenbrier Long-Term Relief Committee (GGLTRC)** to support their efforts on behalf of the **Greater Greenbrier COVID-19 Task Force** from Clifton's budget. Larry Davis moved to also **donate \$1,000 from the Memorial Fund (Mission Division)** to the **Greater Greenbrier Long-Term Relief Committee (GGLTRC)**. The motion was seconded and passed.

In addition, Larry reminded us that, as a church, we need to seek other ways to help with feeding school kids while the schools are closed and be

particularly alert to the needs of people that should benefit from the Stone Soup Fund.

**Kereshmeh Kashefian, Chair of the Outreach Committee**, reported that she is broadcasting our services in real time on face-book and Youtube. The committee is looking for ways to get our services to those who do not have computers. Kereshmeh also reported Clifton has received \$550 donations and a pelage of \$50/month through Paypal.

**Houston Arbuckle, Chair of the Crossroads Committee** reported the committee had set up a meeting for our “cluster” with Maureen Wright but it had to be postponed due to COVID-19—no new date has been set.

**Pastor Ron Miller** reminded the session that it is important, at this time, to develop some intentional methods to stay connected and be sure that no one is neglected.

In **Other BUSINESS** session approved the following changes in Clifton’s Manual of Operations (**Con’t. on Pg. 6-Session**)

## **Prayer Concerns**

**Brownie Dunn, Sue Wyman, Buddy Baker, Marie Reynolds, Max Gibson, Becky Godby, Jennifer Skaggs, Sue Larson, Doug Arbuckle, The Crossroads Committee, and the Matthew 25 Church emphasis**



*The President, Faculty, Board of Governors  
and the Graduating Class  
of  
Marshall University  
announce that  
Catherine Colton Wade  
is a candidate for the degree of  
Bachelor of Science  
in  
Microbiology  
with Honors  
Saturday afternoon, May second  
Ten O'clock P.M.  
in a school  
Room in Health House*

Catherine Wade is graduating from Marshall University this semester. The ceremony was scheduled for May 2, but that time has been changed due to the Covid-19 orders. The ceremony will be announced later. Congrats to Catherine and her family. This is a great day of honor in life. We are proud, and we know that her family is too.

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Jim and Suzy Meadows have exciting good news in the midst of all of the confusion around us at the moment. Their daughter and son-in-law, Emily and Brian Rodavich of Washington, PA, are expecting their second child, a baby boy, in October. That will be great excitement for Mom and Dad, but even greater excitement I believe for the grandparents and great-grandparents.



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Nima ShahabShahmir is graduating from West Virginia University Institute of Technology this Spring.



As in all cases the day of the graduation is changing due to this virus, but Nima will be graduating in May with a Major Degree in Information Systems and a Minor in Business Administration. We are proud of Nima, and we know that his family is very excited in this accomplishment.

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There are two Greenbrier East high School Seniors from our church who will be graduating this June. We are sorry that this has been such a difficult Senior Year for them as they have missed their Prom and their Spring activities, and possibly a graduation event, but nevertheless it is a major changing point of their lives as they graduate from High School and face a very new and different future. We really want to wish Ashton Gillilan and Kyle King the best. We are proud of you, and we are looking forward to what the future holds, as we know you and your family does.



Wedding Bells will chime on May 10 at Ravens Nest Hollow Lane in Hillsboro, WV for Tori Pierce and Christian Nahouse. Tori is the daughter of Suzanne Beard Pierce, and the grand-daughter of Mary Alice and Gene Beard. What a great excitement even in this hard C-19 time as Tori and Christian start their journey as husband and wife. We wish them great happiness and best wishes.



**(Letter-Con't. from Page 1)** *There are also folks younger than that who have lung issues, diabetes, or other conditions that mean they are more likely to be infected. Even if we can legally do so, is it appropriate to put people at risk or to allow them to put themselves at risk?*

*We could say we are taking a leap of faith in deciding to open our church. I think it's just as possible to say we are being guided by fear if we decide to resume meeting in person. We might be afraid our church won't survive, afraid our budget will be so severely compromised that we will have to cut staff, programs or mission giving or perhaps go to a part-time pastor. (As if that's the end of the world, which it isn't.)*

*I think the wisest move is to continue online worship for the time being. One presbytery has suggested that their churches wait three weeks after permission is granted to resume gathering for worship before they do so. The thinking is that they should wait and see if new cases spike or if they continue to taper off before they go back to their sanctuary. That makes sense to me.*

*If your church wants to resume in-person worship, you have that right. I would only tell you to be careful, to think through how you're going to keep people safe, and to consider maintaining your online worship services so that those who don't feel comfortable coming back yet will still be able to worship and maintain connection with your church.*

*I'm including three articles I have found helpful. One is called "Returning to Church," which comes from the Wisconsin Council of Churches. The second is "24 Questions Your Church Should Answer Before People Return" by Ken Braddy, which, though written from a large church perspective, raises questions that all churches need to consider. (Thanks to Rebecca Mihm and Nancy Martin for sharing these resources with me originally.) The final piece, "Returning to Work and Services," comes from Jeff Carpenter, the*

*presbytery's insurance agent. You may also want to check with your church's insurance agent to see what guidance they might offer.*

*Since I've been working from home, I frequently find myself exhausted at the end of the day. I frequently find my head spinning from too much information or perhaps too many opinions. I wish I could offer you a definite timeline as well as definite steps to take before we can safely resume worship. However, at this point, I have more questions than answers I offer this pastoral letter as my best advice at this time. It's not the final word, though; it's what I think now. I have been wrong before. I will be wrong again. Maybe I'm wrong now. Please know that I am praying for you, I am praying for wisdom for myself and for all of us, and I strongly believe that God is still at work in all of this and that God will use all of this for God's glory.*

*Ed Thompson, General Presbyter*

**NOTE CONCERNING LETTER:** Clifton has continued with worship with *Facebook Live* throughout this period of Covid-19 encouraging all people to follow the orders from the Governor's office. We want to continue following those orders with added caution. When people start coming back to church we do want to maintain safety for all who worship. We want all who are immune compromised or connected to another person who might be immune compromised in any fashion to consider continuing to worship with us through our virtual reality opportunities. We do not wish anyone to get sick or to cause severity on anyone.

The Session will determine our schedule of opening various aspects of our church facility as well as operating procedures, and it shall convey those decisions to all the friends and members of our church through our differing means of communication (email, US Mail, facebook, web page and telephone). Stay alert and aware. We shall get through this period knowing that God is still in control. We are learning a lot of things about



ourselves and our faith during this journey. As Stephen Baldwin put it so well on Palm Sunday when he said in our pulpit, *“If we have learned anything in the past few weeks and possibly in the months to come is that maybe we don’t control as much as we think we do. This is God’s world. God is in control.”*

What more could be said. We shall return from this time stronger and more faithful. There will be changes, but they will be changes we make because they make us better and more able to be a strong Matthew 25 Church.

# CLIFTON BELIEVES IN MISSIONS



(Submitted by Larry Davis) Since March 29th, Clifton Presbyterian Church has donated \$2,500 to help people in dire need during the COVID-19 pandemic. These donations came from the church's mission budget and the part of the Memorial Fund that's dedicated to mission support.

First off, \$500 was given to support the COVID-19 response of Presbyterian Disaster Relief Assistance (PDA). The PDA has already announced that 2.7 million dollars from reserves in their general fund are being used for the COVID-19 response.

There was a total of \$1,500 in donations to the Greater Greenbrier Long-Term Relief Committee (GGLTRC) to support their efforts as part of the Greater Greenbrier COVID-19 Task Force.



State Senator Stephen Baldwin was responsible for the assumption of the lead role that the GGLTRC is taking in this regard. Of note is their distribution of food to 23,000 at-home school children in one week.

According to Greenbrier County Commissioner Tammy Shifflett:



“The GGLTRC task force is a huge asset to everyone in the county. We have utilized the GGLTRC in numerous ways since its creation after the flood of 2016, always with much benefit to the county. Whether for housing, infrastructure, or this new COVID-19 crises, they have found the resources to work on each issue.”

The remainder of the donations went to the new Feeding Seniors project serving Alderson, Lewisburg, White Sulphur Springs, Frankford, Renick, Ronceverte, and Williamsburg. By April 24th a host of volunteers will have fed more than 6000 meals to seniors and other at-risk individuals (e.g., disabled or immunosuppressed people) in an attempt to keep them at home and safe. The meals were prepared by Hill and Holler and Fruits of Labor at low cost. After April 24th, many volunteers will help by providing grocery shopping and delivery for many of the same people and others. Incidentally, WVSOM has provided the means for answering calls from people requesting meals and recording their information.

Seventy-nine-year-old Patty Hunter of Alderson said, *“It’s a wonderful thing they’re doing. The food provided by Feeding Seniors makes life just a little easier during a difficult time, and for those seniors who are in poor health or have no way of getting out, it is truly a blessing. It’s an example of why it’s great to live in West Virginia, a place where everybody chips in to help when it’s needed the most.”*

**(Session-Con’t from Page 3)** in order to give direction in emergency circumstances. (1) A quorum of the session shall be one half its members and the moderator. (2) The session shall yearly appoint chairs to Worship Committee, the Property Committee, and the Mission Committee as well as for all other need committees. (3) The emergency

decision to cancel worship or any other activity scheduled at any Clifton Presbyterian Church property due to inclement weather or any extraordinary circumstance will be made by Clifton's pastor, property chair and clerk of session. If Clifton does not have a regular pastor at the time, the chair of the worship committee will serve as the pastor's replacement. The cancelation will be announced by telephone, media, and other available technology.

Pastoral concerns of the church were discussed, and **Ron Miller** adjourned the meeting with the prayer. The May Stated Session Meeting will be May 3, 2020

# A NO CALENDAR PAGE

(No Calendar this Month again)

A fun way to pass the time during this Pentecost Month Preparation. A puzzle found by Suzy Meadows.

### Word Search

Can you find the following words in the puzzle below?

church	fire	Pentecost	Spirit
disciples	fruits	power	symbolized
extracted may	heaven	presence	tongues
fifteenth	languages	signs	wind
filled	offering	sound	

R E W O P C S M P M T F E S S  
 B V S E L P I C S I D I C E Y  
 T O N G U E S I G N S F N G M  
 D N I W Z F I L L E D T E A B  
 P E N T E C O S T X B I S U O  
 F I R S T F R U I T S E E G L  
 G N I R E F F O B U S T R N I  
 H C R U H C N E V A E H P A Z  
 Y R A N I D R O A R T X E L E  
 D N U O S P I R I T F I R E D

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one another. Do not forget, God is with us.”-**Suzy Meadows, Chair of the Christian Education Committee**(quoted from the Session Meeting)

## Prayer Concerns

**Brownie Dunn, Sue Wyman, Buddy Baker, Marie Reynolds, Max Gibson, Becky Godby, Jennifer Skaggs, Jeff Campbell, the families who lost loved ones, the unemployed, Doug Arbuckle, The Crossroads Committee, churches during this C-19 period, the Shepherd Center, The Greenbrier Long-Term Recovery Committee, and our Matthew 25 Church emphasis**

## Pentecost Sunday May 31



A day of celebration for the church. This year as it falls on Memorial Day Weekend, we must not only remember those who have left this journey, but we must proclaim the hope and power of the Spirit of God for our Church as we move forward.

### Contributors and Help on May Newsletter

**Suzy Meadows**-Puzzle and Matthew 25 Work

**Larry Davis**-Mission Committee Article

**Houston Arbuckle**-Clerk’s Report

And an incredibly Special Thank you to **Alice Roth** who prepared our church mailing labels to be used for this Newsletter. While I did not get all of the addresses to her, she got many of them, and has created a great piece for our mailings.

Please have articles and events for the June Newsletter no later than May 28.



“Our work now as a Matthew 25 church is just as important as ever. We will each find ways to do our part outside the church walls.

Rather than group activities, we as Session members and our

congregation too, can help individually in many ways. Our physical contact with others may be limited but we can still call, text, email, facetime, etc. others to stay connected. Some may be able to assist others by grocery shopping, volunteering to deliver meals, sewing masks, donating money, etc. We can all help by social distancing and praying for



Coming May 2020

**May 3**

Cents-ability Offering

**May 10**

Mother's Day

**May 12**

~~Election Day~~-Postponed until June 9

**May 31**

Pentecost Sunday

Worship at Facebook live:

<https://www.facebook.com/pg/cliftonpc/posts/>



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