



# Contact



## Charting a path without GPS, a map or compass

*Putting our faith in a constant God when a pandemic world exists*

**By The Rev. Thomas W. Caruso**  
**Interim minister**

Hebrews 13:8 tells us that “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.” To which I add:

“Alleluiah! Thank you, dear Lord!”

I have a shorter version of that:

“The world is changing; God is not.”

That “North Star” of Christian truth has been guiding us forward since our Leadership Team decided to close the building in mid-March.

The Bible says put your faith in God during these chaotic times of plague. Nothing could be wiser!

We know God doesn’t promise absolute protection, but I realize praying for such is comforting and in keeping with our faith tradition.

Yet we all have different fears to handle. I think my biggest fear is transmitting the virus to someone.

And we certainly are caught in a world wind of fear. Catholic theologian and author Henri J.W. Nouwen called us “a fearful people” in his 1986 book *Lifesigns*.

*“The more people I come to know and the more I come to know people,” he writes, “the more I am over-whelmed by the negative power of fear.”*

Nouwen, whom I heard preach at Yale Divinity School in the early 1990s, said we humans always have something to fear.

He claims we no longer know what a life without fear looks like. I agree whole-heartedly.

Remember, the good ‘ol days of just two months ago when the virus was a distant worry in far-off places? Were our other fears non-existent?

No, we had fears aplenty about a looming presidential campaign, our health, health care, bad weather, driving at night, climate change and, of course, church finances. Nouwen was right!

When one fear disappears or subsides, another replaces it. And the current virus is a doozie of a fear-producing event.

Each day brings a new twist in a bizarre tale of a virus that seems manufactured in some fictitious, nightmarish laboratory of a mad scientist. Except it’s real!

With something this novel, it’s hard sometimes to discern good advice from bad.

All the more reason to turn to prayer, meditation and Scripture reading.

If you haven’t already, please check out the daily devotionals we send out M-F. They are on our web site.

Starting with the recorded sound blogs of the Jesuit-based Pray-As-You-Go, I try to link the Scripture, commentary and music with something current in our lives, the church’s situation or the world.

Beginning with Palm Sunday, Kim Merkert, Mike Wojdylak and I have designed, filmed and edited worship services on tape.

I know pride is a sin, so I prefer to think of them as an offering to the glory of God. So I will praise God and thank the Lord for helping us create something that is widely acclaimed.

Nothing beats real, so I pray for the day when we can gather together under one roof. Not sure when, how or what it will look like, but I know the Holy Spirit will be with us in full force at that time.

In the meantime, reach out to other folks in church, family and friends. Physical isolation doesn’t mean being cut off from everyone.

And recall Romans 8:28.

*“We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God - those whom he has called according to his plan.”*

# News from Penn Central Conference

## *A Message from Pastor Nora*



### **Dear Friends of Penn Central Conference**

“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” - Romans 8:38-39

*I feel so separated lately.*

Yes, we have been a creative people and nary has a day passed that I do not have visitors by Zoom, phone, email or text. But it is not just people that seem distant, it is EVERYTHING!

Yet, scripture is constant and serves as a daily reminder that nothing, NOTHING, can separate any of us from the love of God. I find affirmation in this as there are moments when it feels impossible for God to be in the spaces of sadness and grief and loss and loneliness that I find myself mired in. *How about you?*

It is through my daily practices -- things like walking or stretching, deep breathing or coloring, that reconnect me to so many of the timeless truths that even this pandemic cannot take away. Truths like NOTHING separates me from God, and that God is doing a new thing in this season. A reminder that God sets before me life should I choose it. By the time my picture is done, or my rapid heartbeat settled, Truth has set me free to be fully present in the moment that time finds me.

Friends, here we are in the midst of a global pandemic.

We are encouraged to care for one another by staying away from each other, by covering our faces when we must go out, by leaving our buildings empty and striving to find ways to fill our hearts and celebrate God among us in myriad ways. We have family-game nights and hospital visits mediated by technology. Phone trees are alive and well. We have found more worship settings than we might have imagined: Zoom, Facebook live, streaming on YouTube, conference calls and good old-fashioned, hand-written letters.

These are all born out of necessity. All grounded in timeless truths like humanity's desire for connection and God's steadfast love.

These are the moments that I have to dig deep into my practices that connect me to these timeless truths of scripture. *What practices do you have that connect you? That grounds you when the Earth shifts beneath your feet?*

The link below is a short vlog about some spiritual practices. Perhaps a new one or an adaptation of a familiar one or something tried and true - but each one of us needs to be doing something to stay connected to the One from whom nothing, not even a global pandemic, can separate us.

For our pastors and chaplains, there are a few additional vlogs to feed their spirits that will be released over the next several days on the Penn Central Facebook page and our YouTube channel.

**Shalom,  
Pastor Nora Faust**

Associate Conference Minister for Congregational and Ministerial Excellence



# United Scrip Gift Card Orders NOW AVAILABLE!

Scrip gift card orders will be collected and delivered once a month beginning in May. The schedule through the summer is listed below. Orders are due to the church office on **Wednesdays between 2 and 3PM**. Orders may be picked up or will be mailed the following Wednesday between 2 and 3PM. **ALL ORDERS MUST INCLUDE \$2.00 FOR HANDLING TO DEFRAY OUR POSTAGES COSTS.**

Contact the church office at **717-533-7300** or [info@redeemchurchucc.org](mailto:info@redeemchurchucc.org) to receive an order form.

The present-day celebration of Mother's Day began in the year 1908 when Anna Jarvis organized a memorial for her mother, Ann Jarvis, a peace activist who used to care the wounded soldiers of the American Civil War. The event was held at the St Andrew's Methodist Church in Grafton, West Virginia, which currently holds the International Mother's Day Shrine. Anna Jarvis began the task of getting support for the celebration of Mother's Day in the United States in 1905 after her mother died the same year. She wanted to honor all the mothers of the world who have done a lot for their family and society.

Due Date (Wednesday)	Pickup Date (Wednesday)
May 13 -----	May 20
June 10 -----	June 17
July 15 -----	July 22
August 12 -----	August 19

**REMEMBER: ORDERS ARE DUE BY DATES LISTED!**

Due to her continuous efforts, most of the US states by 1911 started celebrating Mother's Day as a local holiday and the West Virginia, the home state of Jarvis became the first state to declare the holiday for the occasion in the year 1910. Finally, the second Sunday of May was officially designated as Mother's Day in the USA and was declared as a national holiday after Woodrow Wilson, the 28th President of United States of America signed the proclamation in the year 1914. In this way, the present Mother's Day came into existence in the USA and the same date is also selected by countries like India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Italy, Singapore, Belgium, and a lot more other countries.

### Why do we celebrate Mother's Day?

Mother's Day is an occasion which is celebrated in various parts of the world to express respect, honor, and love towards mothers. The day is an event to honor the contribution of mothers, acknowledge the efforts of maternal bonds and the role of mothers in our society. Although, different countries celebrate the occasion on different dates, the common months of the celebrations are March or May. Mother's Day is a similar effort like other celebrations like Father's Day, Siblings Day, Grandparents Day and others.

It is a day which makes people remember the importance and significance of mothers in their life and is observed as a day to give special emphasis to the motherly figures around the world.

## Support Continues at Redeemer Despite Covid-19

**On March 13<sup>th</sup>**, Redeemer made the decision to close its doors due to the pandemic. This not only affected our members and our new building partner, Life Gospel Chinese Christian Church, but also the hundreds of other individuals who find solace and refuge within our walls....the individuals who attend recovery meetings here, in some cases 7 days a week.

Daily meetings are a critical source of peer support and encouragement for individuals who are in recovery. Abruptly discontinuing meetings could cause someone in recovery to spiral back into dark places they dare not go. We could not let that happen.

Recognizing this ongoing need, Redeemer offered the groups the opportunity to continue to meet, just not within the building. Each Monday through Friday, the Nooner AA group gathers in our parking lot promptly at noon. Even on drizzly days, they circle their cars, set up their lawn chairs at least 6 feet apart, and hold their sessions. They even bring their dogs! The KISS AA group will begin meeting outside as well.

Redeemer is proud to continue to provide support to our building partners during these not-so-normal times and we look forward to the day when we can open our doors to them again.



# Leadership Team Update

By Kim Merkert, Chair

## **Prayers of Healing for:**

**Betsy Baker**, who remains hospitalized at UPMC Community General Hospital

**Dennis Mongold**, Barry's brother, who has completed a long course of chemotherapy.

**Jason Gregg**, who underwent surgery for cancer on April 27<sup>th</sup>.

**Those afflicted** with the Coronavirus.

## **Prayers for Support and Comfort for:**

**Those Families** of friends and loved ones lost to the Coronavirus.

**Prayers for the Larger Community:** For those who serve and protect; for those in government who make decision that affect our world, our country, our commonwealth, and our communities. For those on the front lines who are combatting the Coronavirus to keep us safe.

**Prayers of Thanks** to the Brothers and Sisters of the Life Gospel Chinese Christian Church for their donation of 300 masks to Redeemer.

Since the church is closed, many of the projects we were working on are on hold for the time being. The profile meeting and church clean-up day will be rescheduled once we begin meeting as a group again. Following are the projects Leadership Team (along with some of our congregation members) has been working on during the closure.

A donation option is now available on our web site, so that folks can contribute online offerings. There are still a few features being worked on, but the basic functionality is there. Thank you all so very much for continuing to send offerings and donations by mail, online, and by drop-off to the office. As you know, even though we are not meeting, our expenses have not stopped. The Redeemer community is very generous and supportive of the work that continues to go on during the closure.

Pastor Tom has been busy reaching out to members and preparing devotionals. Audrey Baker has been making phone calls as well to help keep us connected. Our community outreach team has also been reaching out to people.

Weekly church services have been prepared on video and posted online to YouTube. We are planning to continue doing this throughout the closure.

We have been discussing and researching how we can help support the local Asian community as they are facing racism and discrimination based on the Coronavirus.

Jorja Barton, our office administrator, has been keeping all the office happenings coordinated. She has also been doing all the communication to members when there are things that need to be sent out.

We have begun to obtain estimates to repair the floor in the men's room downstairs.

We look forward to being able to pick up on the rest of our Leadership Team projects as soon as we are able to start meeting again, but in the meantime, the Leadership Team has been using this time as a chance to slow down a bit and recharge.

Our conference minister, Dr. Carrie Call, has sent an update advising us that as areas of PA start to reopen, churches wait to begin reconvening for either indoor or outdoor church gatherings until June at the very earliest. We have no idea, of course, when our area of PA will begin to lift some of the stay at home orders that are in place, but we do plan to respect the advice of Dr. Call. The safety of our congregation and all of the neighbors and support groups who use our building is of the utmost importance.

If any of you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out to the LT. We miss you all, and hope you are staying healthy and safe during this time!

## MAY Special Celebrations

### **Birthdays... Have a happy one!**

- **Vonnie Brown**
- **Lorna Davis**
- **Dan Hottenstein**
- **Sharon Shaffer**
- **Adelaide Stong**

### **Anniversaries...Congratulations!**

- **Dan & Pat Hottenstein**
- **Barry & Pam Mongold**



500 West Chocolate Avenue  
Hershey, PA 17033  
717-533-7300

[info@redeemerchurchucc.org](mailto:info@redeemerchurchucc.org)

Rev. Thomas W. Caruso, Interim Pastor  
[pastor@redeemerchurchucc.org](mailto:pastor@redeemerchurchucc.org)