



# Oakmont Presbyterian Church



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October 14, 2020

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Few of us get through life without serious challenges. We “invite in” some of our problems by our own actions or inactions while others force their way on us unbidden. Some problems are ours; others are borne by people we love. Some of our darkest valleys are but a short walk; others, we plod through for life.

The Psalmist’s affirmation is that help comes from God: “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” (Psalm 46:1) Like the psalmist we have faced our troubles by turning to God: for help, for strength, for wisdom, for guidance, for courage. There may be no more earnest prayers than those we have voiced in the presence of our troubles. Eugene Peterson translates the first beatitude from Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount this way

“You’re blessed when you’re at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule.” (Matthew 5:3)

The spiritual problem we inevitably face is that we’d rather have more of us: more wisdom, more courage, more power to alter our life...that is, we’d rather have more control. As the psalmist was facing something monumental...“...though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult” there was no question of regaining control; that problem was something that only God could resolve. Twice we read

“The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.” (Psalm 46:7, 11)

Sometimes God’s “with us” covers us like a warmed blanket. We cannot explain it or prove it; it just is. There are other times when that assurance is not felt, but only trusted. Even then, there is power in the trust. We proceed with a courage that comes from “knowing” (trusting) that we are not alone, that our God is engaged with us and the world around us for the purpose of light and life and peace. What we learned as a mealtime grace echoes in our memory as our saving hope: “God is great and God is good!”

If we need a reason to trust in God’s goodness and greatness, we need only look to Jesus’ resurrection. When the powers of state had their way with the Galilean rabbi and his limp, crucified body was laid to rest in a borrowed tomb, God, our refuge and strength, undid his death. Some years later, St. Paul put the caption under the crucifixion picture: our God works for the good in everything with those who love God. (Romans 8:28)

We cannot predict what the coming month will bring or the months after that. The coronavirus will remain after the election has been resolved. We can predict, that is, we can trust that we will face it with the presence and help of our God who is determined to transform our Good Friday world. We face our fears with trust in the presence and power of our God.

Yours in Christ,

*Steve*

(over please for an OPC update)

## OPC Update

**Five confirmands to be received into membership in worship at 11 a.m. on Sunday, October 25<sup>th</sup>.** Susan Kabazie and Eric Walker led the 2019-2020 confirmation process. Normally, confirmands are received on Pentecost (in late spring or early summer). This year, however, the pandemic caused a pause in the confirmation gatherings which were resumed this fall. After making their statements of faith to the October 13<sup>th</sup> Session and making a profession of faith in worship, we will welcome into membership: Amberson Bauer, Brandon Williams, Enzo Lio, Jack Keating and Taylor Billet.

**Youth Group Meetings Set** – after a very positive initial meeting the youth group’s next meeting will be Sunday, November 15<sup>th</sup>. For the latest information please email [R.Bailey@oakmontpresby.org](mailto:R.Bailey@oakmontpresby.org).

**Sunday Morning Zoom Adult Education** – we continue our October series “*Issues of Race*” led by our own Dave Fawcett. Dave is a trial attorney and on the board of the Innocence Project. To receive a zoom invitation please send Steve an email at [swilson@oakmontpresby.org](mailto:swilson@oakmontpresby.org).

**Living with Courage and Hope in Uncertain Times** – The November Adult Education will study Adam Hamilton’s book UNAFRAID: Living with Courage and Hope in Uncertain Times. Participants are encouraged (but not required) to purchase a copy of the book. OPC member and life coach Sam Anderson will lead the series. Please email Steve if you would like to be included in the zoom invitation.

**Election Eve Worship Service** – we will gather Monday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 7 p.m. in the sanctuary for worship and prayers for our nation. Please use the “Reserve a Seat” on our website [www.oakmontpresbyterianchurch.org](http://www.oakmontpresbyterianchurch.org).

**Rationale for Use of the Building During the Pandemic** – Session is determining the use of the OPC building to provide for individuals’ safety and to limit the workload of our custodian who sanitizes each room following its use. Session has asked that all who use the building follow pandemic guidelines including wearing a mask, sanitizing hands, and maintaining physical distance. Given the essential nature of recovery groups, Session has granted permission to the three recovery groups meeting at OPC. Session has also granted permission to smaller groups which are able to maintain the safety guidelines. Larger groups including the Session are meeting only by Zoom.

**Why Must We Reserve a Seat for Worship?** – some have asked. Session has consistently sought to provide for the safety of OPC members and friends. “Reserve a Seat” is found on our website at [www.oakmontpresbyterianchurch.org](http://www.oakmontpresbyterianchurch.org). It provides two essential functions: it assures that we limit worship attendance to a safe capacity (70 in the sanctuary and approximately 25-30 in Friendship Hall), and it enables us to contact worshippers - which we did once - in the event that someone in worship later discovers their possible coronavirus exposure.

**Thank you for your contributions** – because of members’ faithful contributions and because of a one-time grant from the US Payroll Protection Program OPC finances for 2020 are sound. We have met payroll, provided for ongoing building repairs/utilities/insurance, we are fulfilling our mission support to active mission agencies, and we have supported those in financial need. We are encourage to finish well what we have been giving this year.

**Estimates of Giving for 2021** – will be mailed on October 19<sup>th</sup>. You will receive a letter from our Stewardship Team, a 2021 estimate of giving card and a return envelope. Please prayerfully consider your gift for 2021 and return your estimate of giving card. We are reminded that, because of the pandemic, some are facing hardships and cannot give. Every gift counts!

**Weekly Gathering for Prayer** – given the change in the weather, the weekly prayer gathering will meet in the OPC Dining Room, Wednesdays at noon beginning October 28<sup>th</sup>. Everyone is welcome. Bring a lunch if you’d like.