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March 26, 2021

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The psalmist wrote powerfully about the Hebrews' life in exile

By the rivers of Babylon—
there we sat down and there we wept
when we remembered Zion.
On the willows there
we hung up our harps.¹

We have endured elements of exile while COVID has occupied our country and the world. Many worked from home. Children had virtual education. We were unable to visit family in assisted living facilities and hospitals. We had only limited guests at funerals and memorial services for our beloved dead. Holidays passed with gatherings nearby and traveling afar deferred by many.

While we adapted our life together during the past year our congregation did not surrender.

- **Care for one another** has continued over the phone and via email and occasional cards.
- **Don's weekly study & Sunday adult education** have continued with strong attendance.
- Each week **Ronnie Bailey has handwritten communiques** to our children and youth.
- **Michael Frank has worked diligently** to provide music for worship.
- **Ron Burkert has trained five new teams** in the use of our new AV-livestreaming equipment and members have appreciated the opportunity to "gather electronically".
- **Dale Remai** has continued to clean and sanitize the building and **Maureen Stecik** has provided current information about the changes during COVID and she processed 21 congregational letters while **Marge Kuhn** and **Tracy Messenger** have received member gifts and paid the staff and other church expenses.

Our members have continued the ministry and mission of our church. Thank you all!

Now as hospitalizations and deaths have declined and as vaccinations increase, we are sensing that the reign of COVID may be declining. From members who have suffered with the COVID virus we know that it is still dangerous. So, we will be diligent in wearing our masks and maintaining physical distance.

But!!! We have begun a process of returning to in-person worship and opening the building to group meetings. What a joy these past two Thursdays to be together in the sanctuary offering

¹ *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. (1989). (Ps 137:1–2). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

God our corporate praise and prayers. Few were present but the Spirit was in our midst just the same. Likewise, the groups that meet in our building have expressed their appreciation for being able to resume their gatherings.

Here is a schedule for **Holy Week worship**:

- **April 1st - Maundy Thursday in-person worship**, 90-person limit, please register on line at www.oakmontpresbyterianchurch.org or call the church office (412.828.5700). This enables us to contact worshippers should someone later test positive for COVID. The message will be *The Other Holy Night* based on John 13:1-5, 12-15.
- **No Good Friday worship** this year at OPC.
- **April 4th - Easter worship, 8:30 and 11 am**, 90-person limit for each worship service. Please register online or call the church office. The message will be *Our Easter Hope* based on John 20:1-18.

Here is some additional information that may be helpful to you:

- **Communion on Maundy Thursday** will be provided in individual cups that will be distributed as people enter worship. Each cup will have two tabs on top. Remove the first tab to get the wafer. Remove the second tab for the juice. Instructions will be provided in the bulletins.
- **For the time being our nursery will not be staffed.** However, parents are welcome to take their children into the Marie Berg Chapel (off the 5th St. vestibule) should that be needed/desired. The room will be sanitized each week.
- **Music in worship will be provided by an ensemble of masked singers.**
- **On the Sundays following Easter** we will worship at 11:00 am with a 90-person limit. When we regularly meet that limit, we will notify the congregation and resume the 8:30 am worship service.
- **Summer hours for worship will begin on Memorial Day weekend.** The late service will begin at 10 am. The early worship service, whenever it is resumed, will remain at 8:30 am.
- For those unable to attend and those who are limiting their participation in groups, **Sunday worship will continue to be livestreamed** via our church website.

Reclaiming “normal” will take some time, but our return has begun!

Grace to you all, and

Peace,

Steve