

THE SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH in the City of New York
Pastoral newsletter for September 2020
**A Special Announcement from the Session about
Extending our Stay at Home Worship**

Dear Congregation,

It is with hope and great affection that we share with you the decision of the Session on worship going forward while the coronavirus pandemic continues. In light of the risks associated with spreading the virus during indoor gatherings, the church will not resume in-person worship in the sanctuary before January 2021. Sunday worship will be held over Zoom until the Session decides to resume worship in the sanctuary.

This decision comes after prayerful consideration of the many factors, both for and against, that go into the question of holding worship gatherings in person. It goes without saying that we miss the fellowship, hugs, singing and praying that come with worshiping in the same space. But given the ease with which the virus is spread indoors, our first concern is health and safety, and the expressions of togetherness that come with in-person worship are actually the factors that could make us sick.

That said, we are also heartened and frankly blown away by the spirit and connection created during our worship services over Zoom. Our gatherings have been meaningful, deep and often profound, and have proven we do not need the walls of a building to be Church. We will continue to give our all to ways to worship together remotely, building on the sense of community we have developed at a safe distance over the past several months.

At the same time, we understand that Zoom is not for everyone, so we hope to have more ways to connect outside of Zoom. For example, our Saturday outdoor gathering on Sept. 12 was a success. We'll try it again as long as the weather holds out. Next gathering: September 26!

Also, please note that Rev. Lindsay will be working from the sanctuary occasionally over the next few months and when she does, she would be happy to meet and speak with church members. Before it gets cold, she will also sit by the doors of the church to greet passersby, respond to prayer requests and chat. Please email Rev. Lindsay to see when she will be at the church if you would like to stop by.

As the days and months go by during these uncertain times, this decision, like everything else, is subject to change and evaluation. But one thing is clear -- the bonds we have created in our presence, compassion and love for each other, united in God's kingdom. May God bless you and your loved ones and keep us all safe.

The Session of Second Presbyterian Church



Saturday in the Park with Second

Dear Friends in Christ,

It was wonderful to gather with so many of you in person in Central Park on Saturday, Sept 12. 20 of us showed up, including some we seldom if ever see virtually, either - so we thought, let's do it again! **Saturday, September 26, 1:30 - 2:30 pm, in the Park at the West 93 Street entrance!** It looks like the weather will hold. Though it won't be summer, it may be a bit warmer by next weekend. (Rain date TBA.)

And if you can't make it next Saturday, or even if you can, you can drop by the church and see me this coming **Tuesday, September 22, between 3 and 4:30 pm**. I'll be there anyway (weather permitting), offering a prayer or just a hello for any neighbor who wants to stop in or wave. Especially in light of the Session's very thoughtful and, in my eyes, prudent decision not to resume in-person worship before the new year, we'll continue to try to find new ways to let the neighborhood know that though we aren't worshipping in person right now, the church is still there for them - and for you!



**Moving Forward Towards Calling a Pastor: Mission Discernment
Sunday, September 20, 11 am on Zoom**

[If you need Zoom link, contact Rev. Lindsay or one of your church friends]

Dear Church Friends,

This Sunday, following our 10:15 am Zoom gathering for prayer and fellowship, we will continue on Zoom (after a quick break), for an important piece of our work on the Mission Study. Your attendance is strongly encouraged!

Before we can begin the search for a pastor, we will complete a Mission Study report in which we describe all facets of our church – past, present and future. The most critical part is the definition of our mission – our purpose and reason for being, with the key question: What is God calling this church to be and do?

That is a question for the entire congregation to address. Your input is needed as we are seeking a broad consensus, so we invite you to attend our after-worship Zoom gathering this Sunday. Our worship service will aim to end at 11:00 am, so we can begin our conversation shortly after that.

As you may remember, at the Annual Congregational Meeting in January, we asked everyone to have conversations with our neighbors about major issues facing our community. Karen, Gordon, and Elaine Song stepped up, but the process was short-circuited by the pandemic. However, their notes, which are attached to this email in table form with a quick summary at the end, provide valuable information which we hope you'll look at in preparation for this Sunday's meeting.

At a concrete level, on Sept. 20, we hope to consider both the needs of church members and the needs of our community, and the types of programs and other ways we can serve them.

Here are four questions we want to contemplate:

1. What/why is God breaking our heart for the neighbors/communities around the church? What are the opportunities or needs that we exist to address?
2. What are our members' needs?
3. What programs / services do we feel called to?
4. What is God calling this church to do/be?

To review of the steps we have followed so far: We have had reflections based on our history and Bible study. We answered a congregational survey and discussed the results. That was followed by conversations in the community. In the meantime, we developed a new relationship with the Alexander Robertson School. We hope to

continue our rich relationship with the school while we define new initiatives for the church.

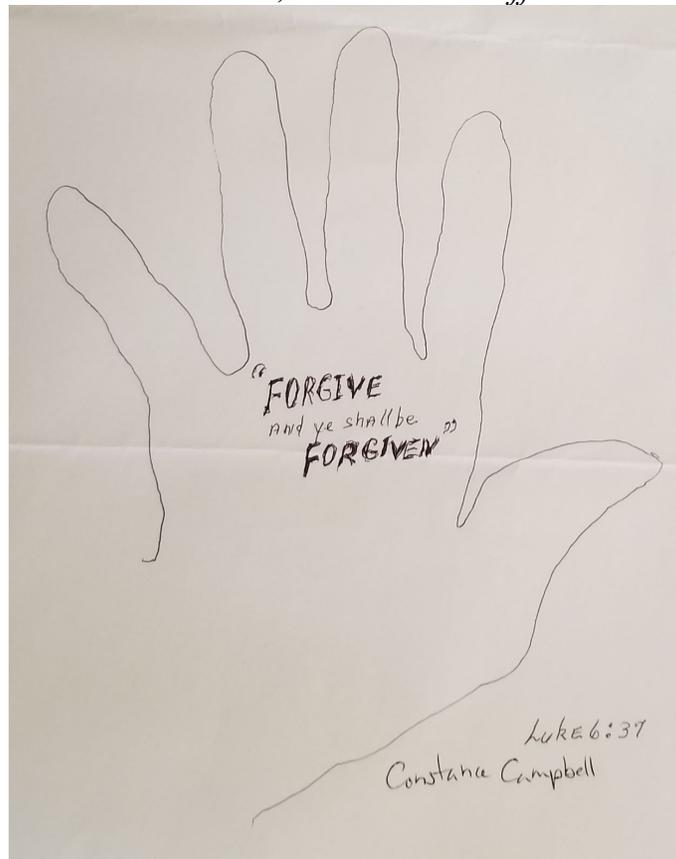
So amid all that is going on in our church and world, this is an exciting time for Second Church. Please join us! **And if you can't, we still want to hear from you! Please feel free to email or call any member of the team with your responses to the 4 questions above (by Wednesday, September 30)!**

- The Mission Study Team: Gordon Bakoulis, Nancy Hughes, Elaine Song, Lindsay Borden (ex officio)

Next Week

Sunday, September 27, 10:15 am: We will gather on Zoom for worship - which we're hoping will include sharing a worship service recorded in our church sanctuary by Lindsay and Eunjung (with a little help from our friends!). Then we'll all lift up our prayers in real time.

I close with thanks to Constance, who sends us off with a word of wisdom.



God be with you, until we meet again.

love and light,
Rev. Lindsay