

# First News

March 10, 2021

## The Post- Pandemic Road (part 2)

by Randy Shepley

How many of you remember what you were doing last year on March 10, 2020? I was in the Outer Banks on a personal prayer and planning retreat. I had spent the first two days of the retreat working on sermon titles for the next year, my oldest son had driven down to spend a day with me, and I was looking forward to three remaining days of silence, reading, praying, and journaling. It was a time of spiritual replenishment I look forward to every year.

However, on Tuesday, March 10, I began to get phone calls from staff and lay leaders about the coronavirus. We had already decided the Sunday before I left to refrain from handshakes and to emphasize practicing handwashing and other basics of sound hygiene. Then, schools started talking about virtual learning. On Thursday, March 12, the NCAA did the unthinkable: they cancelled March Madness, which meant UVA would still be the national champions. For two days, I was having conversations back and forth until on that Thursday afternoon, I drove back early to Newport News. The next day, we held a meeting with the staff and vision team and after significant conversation and prayer, made the decision to suspend in person church activities and move to online worship. This decision occurred a couple of hours before the governor issued his stay home order for Virginia.

It is hard to believe a year has passed. We have learned to work from home, worship at home, and have our groceries delivered to home. As a church, we have developed a growing and creative online worship presence while also experiencing seasons of in person worship under COVID 19



## Lenten Journeys

During the season of Lent we remember the hopelessness and futility of life without Christ. Truly, "we are dust and to dust we shall return."

Lent is often known as a time of fasting in which we give up something good to taste life's bitterness. Yet Lent is also a journey as we see Jesus demonstrate true faithfulness on the road to Jerusalem and the cross. This journey is one in which we are all invited into. It is only in this journey to the cross will we find the life and redemption of Easter.

For the six weeks of Lent, join our ministers each Wednesday at 7 PM as we discuss a spiritual practice for the week. Meeting on Zoom, we will spend 30 minutes learning a new practice and sharing our stories and experiences from the previous session. Together we will explore what it means to be faithful and human during these times. Just follow the Zoom link below. I hope you will join us on the road.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/94585114534?pwd=Tnc3QnFIV3pYl1BTRTdNejVrODVUUT09>

Meeting ID: 945 8511 4534

Passcode: 252385

protocols. All of us have lost touch with our former routines and missed out on significant relationships. Most children and teens in our area have lost the opportunity for in person school attendance, with all of the privileges and responsibilities that come with school. Teachers have missed seeing student faces as they learned to teach and engage students through virtual learning. Against all odds, teachers have taught, and students have learned. Against significant obstacles, our church has worshipped, served our community, and found ways to connect with one another over the phone, social media, email, letters, and cards and in some cases, creative in person connections. We have been lonely, and we have lost much, but, through the grace of God, we have kept moving forward.

In reflecting on this past year, I realize that so many people across our world have lost much more than me. In our church family, people have lost family members to COVID 19. Churches in our city are mourning the loss of members to COVID 19. Many in our city have lost jobs while others have lost months fighting off the effects and aftereffects of the coronavirus. As of this writing, our nation has counted over 525,000 COVID 19 deaths and nearly 30 million cases. It has been a long and challenging season.

Spring, however, is coming. Even in this time of Lent, we look toward resurrection. The hope of a post-pandemic world is moving toward us. Even now, God is making all things new (Revelation 21:5). Even now, thanks to the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ, we can, in the words of Eugene Peterson, "Practice Resurrection."

This new, post-pandemic world will look different from the old. In fact, the post-pandemic church will look different from the old as well. People have and will continue to return to in person worship gradually. A recent study from Lifeway resources noted that of the churches who participated, 31% were having less than 50% of the attendance they had in January of 2020 and another 37% of churches noted that they had less than 70% of their in-person worship attendance from

## Thank you!

We have collected over **832** bottles of hand sanitizer for Yates Elementary School and Jenkins Elementary School. Thank you so much for your generosity and helping the children and school staff in our community stay safe as they have returned to the school building.



## Weekly Worship Opportunities

Join us for worship in person or online March 14 at 8:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.! Randy Shepley will be preaching. If you have any technical difficulties watching the service on Facebook Live, please send us a direct message on Facebook so we can help troubleshoot the issue.

The following is a list of weekly events that can be accessed on the First Baptist Church of Newport News Facebook page, youth events that can be accessed on their Instagram page-@fbcnn youth, and young adult events that meet using Zoom. The 8:30 and 10:30 Sunday worship services are uploaded to our [website](#) each Monday, and can be accessed by clicking on the Resources tab.

### Sundays

8:30 a.m. Traditional Worship  
9:30 a.m. Youth Sunday Bible Study  
9:30 a.m. Children's Sunday School  
10:00 a.m. Pre-K & Kindergarten S.S.  
10:30 a.m. Contemporary Worship  
12:30 p.m. Hispanic Worship

### Mondays

7:00 p.m. Young Single Adults

### Tuesdays

7:30 p.m. Young Adult Couples

### [FBCNN Facebook Live Videos](#)

If you missed Sunday's service and do not have a Facebook account, you can click [here for 8:30](#) or [here for 10:30](#) to watch it on our Vimeo page.

January 2020. Only 2% of churches had more attendance than January of 2020. As I noted in my article last week, this gives some understanding of why digital worship is an essential avenue for connecting with people in our community in the post-pandemic world. The pandemic has radically shifted how church will work in the next decade. The changes that we thought would happen in the church by 2030 have happened all in one pandemic year. As one writer has noted, "Crisis is an accelerator."

I, for one, am excited. I am excited to get to see faces I have missed over the past year. I am excited for the new opportunities God has for us inside the walls, outside in the culture, and digitally on the web. I am eager to hear stories of how God has sustained you through these days. I am looking forward to the newness God has for us. The post-pandemic road will be filled with challenges, uncertainties, and incredible opportunities. I will write more about these next week. Right now, I am grateful for God's provision in the middle of this year of crisis, and remembering prayerfully all who are hurting so much.

*Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good.*

*Pastor Randy*

## Outside Work Day March 20 9 AM



Join us for a fun day of spreading mulch! OK, spreading mulch might not be so fun, but we can use your help in freshening up our flower beds with a new layer of mulch.

Please bring a wheelbarrow, pitchfork, shovel, gloves and whatever else you can use to help. We hope to get this done in one day, so please mark your calendar and come out to help!

Raindate: March 27

## Peninsula Mobile Food Bank March 11 1:30-3 PM

We will be hosting the Virginia Peninsula Mobile Food Bank tomorrow in our parking lot. If you know of someone needing food assistance, please let them know of this opportunity to receive several pounds of food, including meat, fresh produce, and nonperishables. If you would like to volunteer with the Food Bank, you can sign up on their website by clicking [here](#).



## Red Cross Blood Drive April 15 1:30-6PM Payne Fellowship Hall

Mark your calendars for our next blood drive! Help the Red Cross help others by supporting in one of three ways:

- 1) **Donate** blood. You can sign up online by clicking [here](#) or calling 1-800-Red-Cross and let them know you would like to donate at First Baptist Church Newport News on April 15. All donors will receive a COVID antibody test and the results will be emailed to them within 2 days.
- 2) Be one of two **volunteers** needed from our church to sign in and register donors as they arrive. You can sign up to volunteer by clicking the link above or calling 1-800-Red-Cross.
- 3) **Pray** for those volunteering, donating, and receiving.

Their goal is to receive 30 successful collections. Let's help them reach that goal!

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Thank you

I wanted to take a moment to thank everyone for the prayers, cards, calls, emails, food, and loving words and thoughts regarding the passing of my Dad. My Mom, my family, and I are so blessed to be a part of such a loving church family. I also would like to thank all of the staff members who filled in and provided a way for me to be with my family during this time.

Nikki Reid

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**Make a financial contribution to FBCNN today by clicking on the link below.**

**DONATE**

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