

MARCH 31, 2020

Variations

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in this issue

A WORD FROM OUR FINANCE CHAIR

HOLY WEEK 2020

ONLINE SERVICES

CHILDREN & YOUTH NEWS

VESTAVIA HILLS BAPTIST CHURCH

a word from our finance chair

Church family,

I hope this note finds you healthy and well. Hasn't our church staff done an amazing job with the virtual services? While not quite the same as being together, this Sunday's service was just what my family needed to hear after another week of figuring out our *new normal*. I am so thankful for their efforts to keep us connected and worshiping together through this time. Same to all the Sunday school teachers, small group leaders, and many other members that are working hard to keep our classes and groups worshiping, fellowshiping, and working together through this challenging time.

As you would expect, with the absence of our in-person weekly gatherings and the current financial anxieties we are all feeling, our giving is down considerably for March (\$35,000 less than needs). Mike has diligently worked to reduce and/or suspend services and maintenance costs to secure savings and preserve cash, however ministries and expenses continue.

Let's prayerfully consider what each of us can do to mitigate the impact on the missions and operations of VHBC. If you are in a position to be able to give, please take advantage of the many ways available since we are not able to *pass the plates* on Sunday.

Options include our [online giving page](#), the [ShelbyNext App](#), or old-fashioned **snail mail**. Thank you for your ongoing support of VHBC!

Looking forward to us being together again soon,
Dan McMurray, Finance Committee Chair

March Needs: 145,113.00 YTD Budget: 435,340.00
March Offerings: 110,721.00 YTD Offerings: 400,509.00

holy week in exile

The exile in ancient Israel was a traumatic disruption. The city of Jerusalem and all of the towns of any size were sacked and burned. People scattered and all the Judaeans with any talent, leadership, or education marched across the desert to Babylon Iraq, where they lived in an ethnic ghetto, not speaking the language or having any access to power, wealth, and influence in their new land.

It was a time of terrible devastation. Excavations at Debir, Lachish, and Beth-shemesh show enormous devastation. No town in the south escaped. Many died during the siege, and of disease and starvation. The population decreased from 250,000 in the 8th century to perhaps 20,000 after the return.

The Exile presented many problems. The first was basic survival. How do you live in an interim? The most profound problem was a theological and spiritual crisis. Their whole world, the one they knew, had disappeared from under their feet.

It became a profound time of spiritual change. They began to transfer and organize their scriptures from collections and memories into books. They created the synagogue after the Temple was destroyed. But above all was their shared memory. Psalm 137:5-6 comes from this exile.

**If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither!
Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth,
if I do not remember you, if I do not set Jerusalem
above my highest joy.**

It was a time when they realized that only God could take them home again (and God did exactly that). At times, as in Jeremiah 29, they had premature hopes that it would happen fast, but eventually, they settled in for the long haul. Ezekiel 37, a vision of resurrection for the nation (from which James Weldon Johnson's wonderful "Dry Bones" comes from), saw a return to the life they loved. But alas, not right away.

That is where we seem to find ourselves on a much smaller scale. It is breathtaking how quickly our full and prosperous lives of ballgames, family gatherings, and entertainment venues were collapsed by a tiny little virus. Now we sit in our homes, even unable to come to God's houses to worship together. Hugging our friends, sitting together on the pews, rehearsing for choir, eating Wednesday night supper, is now cut off for a little while.

We're making the best of it, praying, helping, and trying to keep the kids going, as well as we can. It dawns on us that this passage is going to be tough.

So what to do?

We're figuring out how to survive, how to live in the interim, and how to keep going. We post things on social media to lend a little courage to one another. But the spiritual crisis is also pervasive. And it's not what self-anointed prophets of doom proclaim. I've been listening to those people since the 1970s, convinced that the end of the world is now at hand. Maybe, maybe not. Jesus said you and I don't get to know that. Period. (Acts 1:7). The book of Revelation is not a how-to book of prediction for us to know ahead. It's a promise that God will outlast evil.

So what now? Just keep on. Live your faith, teach your children, laugh, and rejoice all you can. Help out and pray for the helpers.

But above all remember that this is not the first time of crisis for the world. The spiritual opportunity is not about scaring people into the faith, but about revealing that the way of a cross always was the way. The only way over it is through it.

As we finish this Lenten journey, the tone of our moment is matching the Jesus story in a remarkable coincidence. We aren't just reading about disciples afraid of the unknown up ahead. It's real. We don't know where it's going or how many of us will get through it unscathed. *There is only surviving, holding on, trusting in faith.*

Next week, we will have HOLY WEEK.

We will observe **Maundy Thursday** around our tables at home. I'll be online and you will gather in your homes. We'll light a candle or two, use your bread and whatever cup you can muster, and we'll lift them to God and remember together.

On **Good Friday**, we'll have a **video broadcast at noon** on the *Seven Last Words from the Cross*. Seven of us, including myself, will share short reflections on each word. You will see many of your fellow members on the video, with accompanying music.

And we will have **Easter**. Not gathered, but Easter, like the first one, will still happen. The first one, I would remind us, was women sneaking to a tomb, disciples rushing into it in terror, and the rest hiding in a room with the doors locked.

There is precedent for this moment. And with that, I tell you, "Hold on." There's always something on the other side of every cross. At least that's what I trust, even when my knees are shaking a little.

Gary



zoom with



What is Zoom?

Zoom is a cloud-based video conferencing service you can use to virtually meet with others - either by video or audio-only or both, all while conducting live chats.

Who is using Zoom?

- Our VHBC ministry staff
- Youth Group
- Sanctuary Choir
- Children's Ministry
- And more!

How do I use Zoom?

You can join a meeting by clicking the meeting link sent to you by your group leader or going to join.zoom.us and entering in the meeting ID. You can use either your desktop, laptop, or smart phone as long as they have both working audio and video.

Zoom FAQs

Keep scrolling to check out how our ministry staff is staying connected during this time!

stay connected



vhbc.com

Watch our online services
Sundays at 10 am &
Wednesdays at 6 pm!



Prayer List



Sanctuary Choir Practice on ZOOM
Wednesdays at 7pm

vhbc kids

Together with Friends on ZOOM!

Sundays at 4pm - 1st-3rd grade girls

Mondays at 4pm - Kindergartners

Tuesdays at 4pm - 4th-6th grade girls

Wednesdays at 4pm - 1st-3rd grade boys

Wednesdays at 4:30pm - 4th-6th grade boys

Parents will receive a link to connect to the meeting!

Sundays at 9am - Online Devotional

Sundays at 7pm - Zoom hangout

Tuesdays/Fridays at 11:30am - Instagram Lunch

Wednesdays at 7pm - Zoom Hangout

Schedule for this week only (March 30-April 5)





VHBC quarantine life

