

PILGRIM'S PROGRESS



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APRIL 2020

A MESSAGE FROM PASTOR NERSES BALABANIAN

Powerless, Helpless, Yet Hopeful Անզօր, Անկարող, Բայց Յուսալից

John 14:27
2 Chronicles 20

We are living a time of crisis. Corona virus brought the world to its “knees.” Just a few months ago we did not imagine such an invisible enemy would invade our lives. It affected our health, it affected our jobs meaning our economy, and affected our sociological behavior. We are told to stay home and practice social distancing.

You know me; to stay home is a big “punishment” to me personally. I love humans and interaction.

God loves us, and He sent his Son so that we will be saved from sin, which isolates us from God and each other. God is a God of relationship. He loves His family called the church. Christ is the head of the church, and we are the body.

How are we going to be the body of Christ, without being next to each other? Is it possible? Yes, it is possible. In fact, this situation teaches the saying which I read: “With church shutting doors across America, (or the world), it is time for us to show that the church has never been about the building.”

How accurate is this quotation! Let me turn to the Word of God; this is what God put on my heart to share with you.

There is fear all over us. There is uncertainty all over us. There is panic in stores; the anxiety level is high. Sadness within our hearts...

In the Word of God we see so many situations where danger comes and knocks the door of the cities, homes, and individuals. They are not necessarily viruses; there are other “enemies”, which can destroy the peace.



We read in 2 Chronicles 17-20 about **King Jehoshaphat**. He was a good king who had a relationship with God. He was not the perfect king. Although the danger he was facing was not same as our silent enemy called corona virus, yet, we can learn a lot from the attitude. He was facing the Moabite enemies and their allies who were invading his country. A vast army is coming against you (NIV) A great multitude is

coming against you (ESV).

The king was terrified:

“Then Jehoshaphat was afraid and set his face to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. And Judah assembled to seek help from the Lord; from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord.” (2 Chronicles 20:3,4 ESV)

He prayed TOGETHER in fasting.

The king assembled the people of Judah; they came from all cities of Judah to pray together.

I know I cannot ask you to come together in person, but we can pray together wherever we are. In our homes, we can pray together. We will cry out to God to be our refuge, our rock, and our healer.

Acknowledge who God is:

“O LORD, God of our fathers, are you not God in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. In your hand are power and might, so that none is able to withstand you.” (2 Chronicles 20:6 ESV)

The king was afraid from the large numbers of invaders. He felt it was an impossible situation. Helpless...

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UPCOMING 2020 PACC EVENTS

As the impact of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) continues to evolve, we want to assure you, our valued members of the church, that we are monitoring the situation closely. We do so from a position of faith and trust in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and not from fear. Our greatest concern is for your health and safety, as well as our church staff and their families. With that in mind, many earlier events have been postponed, rescheduled or cancelled. The upcoming event list below is a tentative schedule – watch for confirmed dates as the year evolves. Thank you for your understanding and prayer.

Mother's Day
..... Sunday, May 10

Memorial Day PACC and FAPC
Joint Picnic Monday, May 25

PACC Annual Meeting,.....June

Graduation/Acolyte Elevation
.Sunday, May 31 or June 7 (CE)

Summer Student Mission Trip
.....June

Father's Day
..... Sunday, June 21

AEUNA Biennial (Philadelphia)
..... June 25-28

Vacation Bible School
..... July 13-17 (CE)

Rally (Renewal)
..... Sunday, September 13

Merchants Lunch
.....Thursday & Friday,
September 24-25 (Trustees)

Harvest Banquet.....Saturday,
October 25

AMAA & World Council
Meetings.....October 22-25

Harvest Festival
..... Sunday, October 27 (CE)

Thanksgiving Sunday
..... November 22

Congregational Budget Meeting
..... December 6

Christmas Worship Celebration
..... Sunday, December 20

Christmas Eve
Candlelight Service
..... Thursday, December 24

Badveli Nerses Message:

Hope

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“For we are powerless against this great horde that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.” (2 Chronicles 20:12 ESV)

Those words are comforting words to me. God did come and the enemy was defeated.

I look around, and I see anxiety and fear in people. I get it. This situation is new to us. We are not used to shortage. We are not used to people saying to us: You need to stay at home. Schools and colleges are closed. Graduation ceremonies are canceled. We are not used for this. We are in a new situation.

What are my comforting words to you?

SPEND TIME IN PRAYER AND READING GOD'S WORD.

I have often encouraged you to pray and read His Word. We said we didn't have time. Well now, we have all the time we want. Many are doing creative things. There are resources online. Our Bible study leaders are continuing to be in touch with the groups providing resources to read and pray and contemplate on the Word of God.

- Let us pray for those who are struggling with the infection.
- Let us pray also for the scientists who are working to find solutions for this situation.
- Let us pray for the nurses and doctors and all the medical personnel who are working on the frontline.
- Let's pray for our President the governments of the entire world for wisdom and guidance.
- Let us pray for the first responders, the firefighters...
- Let us be THANKFUL in all circumstances.

Jehoshaphat asked the army to worship and be thankful.

“Give thanks to the LORD, for his steadfast love endures forever.” (2 Chronicles 20:21 ESV)

Every day Sevan and I will pray at 8am and 8pm. I am calling your to join us in your place, to prayer to God to make His

presence known in the midst of our crisis.

**LET NOT YOUR HEARTS BE TROUBLED;
FEAR NOT:**

I read from the Gospel of John:

“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.” (John 14:1 ESV)

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.” (John 14:27 ESV)

Jesus was facing Jerusalem when he said those words. He knew that He would go to Calvary and the disciples would be confused and would lose hope. So he kept saying, “Let not your hearts be troubled. I give you an inner peace that beyond human understanding.”

Paul who faced all kinds of dangers and trials wrote:

“He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again.” (2 Corinthians 1:10 ESV)

Fear is an emotion very difficult to control. Here is what I suggest when it hits you. Read these verses from Hebrews:

“I will never leave you nor forsake you.”
So we can confidently say,

“The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?” (Hebrews 13:5b,6 ESV)

TAKE CARE OF OTHERS

I mentioned this last Sunday:

“Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.” (Philippines 2:4 ESV)

Call people, see how are they doing. Think about the needs of others. Take care of the weak ones. Use the social media, if you are old school use the phone, land line.

Jehoshaphat in his prayer said:

We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you. Helpless, yet with hope:

We read in Hebrews 12:2

“Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Let us have a safe week. Trust God, turn to Him, turn your eyes towards Him. He is our hope and refuge. Helpless and powerless, yet “joyful in hope.”

Amen

A MESSAGE FROM PASTOR KEVIN KASPER

Hello everybody,

It is disappointing that we are not together today – community is part of who we are supposed to be. In light of all that is going on, I offer to you these words.

Psalm 90 begins by speaking of God's eternity that he is from everlasting to everlasting. And in the changing times or passing generations do not change who God is. In contrast, the psalmist speaks of human beings as dust, we are here and then we are not, that all of our days will pass away. And because we are all like the grass which withers and fades, the psalmist asks God to teach us (the community of faith) to number our days, so that we may get a heart of wisdom. We number our days, for the purpose of wisdom.

Thursday afternoon I was talking with a friend, and part of our conversation centered around how control is an illusion – but it's an illusion we believe – and that's why when things are out of our control we feel uneasy, maybe even panic, but if we pause for a moment and reflect, that loss of control reveals the vaporous, and transient nature of our lives. It's why the loss of control freaks us out!

Wisdom teaches us to remember our creator while we are young – for he is the unchanging stabilizer in a world that right now seems chaotic. It's why the words of Psalm 23 have brought comfort to so many – "The Lord is my shepherd... and though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for you are with me."

Jesus teaches us that he is the good shepherd – the one who lays down his life for his sheep, and we who hear his voice follow. And while we look to Jesus to find comfort amid the transient nature of living, especially in a time of uncertainty, let us also remember to keep following him. So I offer these words to you from Titus 3:1:

"Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle toward everyone."
(Titus 3:1-2 NIV11)

A friend recently posted these words from Martin Luther:

"I shall ask God mercifully to protect us. Then I shall fumigate, help purify the air, administer medicine, and take it. I shall avoid places and persons where my presence is not needed in order not to become contaminated and thus perchance infect and pollute others, and so cause their death as a result of my negligence. If God should wish to take me, he will surely find me and I have done what he has expected of me and so I am not responsible for either my own death or the death of others. If my neighbor needs me, however, I shall not avoid place or person, but will go freely."

BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT CONGRATULATIONS

Artak Hovhannisyan and Anna Hakopyan
on the birth of their daughter **Elenka Hovhannisyan**
born March 6, 2020

.....

Thank you!

The Deacons wish to thank the congregation for their generous response for the rebinding of our hymnals. We have reached our goal to cover the cost for this project.

Fresno Library Bindery will be doing the rebinding as soon as it is possible considering the current situation.

Thank you so much for always joyfully giving to meet the needs of our church.

In Christ's Love,
Paula Ganimian, Deacons

.....

WITH SYMPATHY

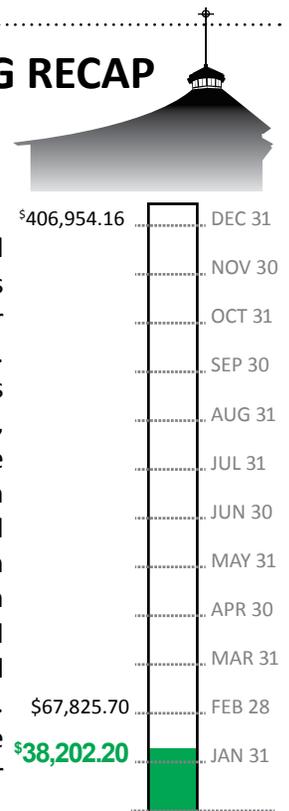
Pilgrim Church Council members extend their deepest condolences to the family and friends of **Leonard Kaprielian** who passed away on March 18, 2020. A memorial service followed by luncheon will be announced.

2020 ANNUAL GIVING RECAP

For where your Treasure is,
there your heart will be also.

– Matthew 6:21

The graph indicates the budgeted amount for annual contributions we voted and agreed upon at our December congregational meeting. The graph is divided into twelfths for each month. In every month, the graph will show where we should be at that time, based on the budget. For February we should be at \$67,825.70 as indicated on the graph. The final amount shown is the actual contributions collected for the month. We have collected \$38,202.20 through February 29. We have collected 56% of the amount needed to operate our church home. Just as a reminder,



should anyone have questions please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

God has blessed me with a love of music. I know multiple worship songs that touch me as though God is speaking directly to me through the lyrics and music. I've shared

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Treasurer's Recap:

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several songs with you, but Kari Jobe's "Forever" impacted me in such a way that Easter will never be the same for me. The lyrics emotionally, beautifully and powerfully tell of the crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord. As I grow closer to Jesus and recognize His presence in my life I think of what He did and I am humbled and the truth that I added to His suffering overwhelms me. There is no greater gift. My salvation is free and was paid for by Jesus in every way. The only payment or action I have is to life my hands in surrender, obedience and thanks to Him.

The moon and stars they wept

The morning sun was dead

The Savior of the world was fallen

His body on the cross

His blood poured out for us

The weight of every curse upon him

One final breath He gave

As Heaven looked away

The Son of God was laid in darkness

A battle in the grave

The war on death was waged

The power of hell forever broken

The ground began to shake

The stone was rolled away

His perfect love could not be overcome

Now death where is your sting

Our resurrected King has rendered you defeated

Forever He is glorified Forever He is lifted high

Forever He is risen He is alive He is alive

Excerpt "Forever" Kari Jobe, Brian Johnson, Christa Gifford, Gabriel Wilson, Jenn Johnson, Joel Taylor

If you're interested in listening and watching the performance, go to YouTube and type in "Kari Jobe forever live at the majestic" or there's a version at Bethel Church, too. Bring Kleenex!

Wishing Everyone a Blessed and Joyful Easter with those you LOVE! Christ is Risen!

"Praise the Lord! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heaven! Praise him for his mighty works; praise his unequalled greatness! Praise him with a blast of the ram's horn; praise him with the lyre and harp! Praise him with the tambourine and dancing; praise him with strings and flutes! Praise him with a clash of cymbals; praise him with loud clanging cymbals. Let everything that breathes sing praises to the Lord! Praise the Lord!" (Psalm 150)

— by Treasurer Patrice Ruble

MODERATOR'S REPORT

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble, therefore we will not fear..." (Psalm 46:1,2)

In times such as this – the current global outbreak of the coronavirus (COVID-19), we are reminded that in sickness or in health, we can turn to God for a dose of His love, peace, hope and joy. No matter how alone we may feel, God reminds us that He will never leave us or forsake us.

We are grateful for technology that helps to keep us connected as *we trust our Heavenly Father in all things and remain calm* in this time of distress.

On a personal note, let me say how blessed we are at Pilgrim Armenian Congregational Church for our pastors, Badvelis Nerses and Kevin. They have been proactive, working diligently to gather us via the internet for worship on Sunday morning. Although we are not together physically, their efforts remind us we remain connected spiritually.

REPORT ON TELECONFERENCE COUNCIL MEETING TUESDAY, MARCH 24, 2020

The following was proclaimed: Given the Coronavirus (COVID-19) situation, we at Pilgrim Armenian Congregation declare:

- Based on reports about the spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19), we are steadfast in protecting the health of our congregation. It is of utmost importance to the pastor(s), Council and Staff. We are in constant prayer for our Church and ready help.

- Yet each Church Member is encouraged to use best judgment in protecting their health and the health of others. Anyone feeling ill or experiencing symptoms of fatigue and/or fever is asked to stay home. Even if one believes they are not sick, but are coughing or sneezing, they should be mindful of the anxiety this may cause others around them.

- *Let us be faithful and vigilant in our prayer for all nations, communities, families and individuals most affected by this outbreak, and for the spiritual leaders, medical personnel and government officials seeking a solution.*

- **Above all, let us remember and rejoice that "nothing in life or in death can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."** (Romans: 8:38-39)

The Council then acknowledged and recognized our pastors for their dedication in glorifying and serving God through Pilgrim Church.

Each Board and Committee gave a verbal report. A special period was designated on the agenda for prayer. Various individuals expressed a prayer of thanksgiving to God while seeking His protection.

The Trustees presented the financial position of the church, indicating that January and February's giving had decreased significantly. The donation amounted to 56% of the budgeted allocation.

Having no new business, the meeting was adjourned with a prayer by Badveli Nerses.

In closing, I would like to reiterate what our Trustee's Chairman, Sammy Ganimian, expressed in his recent letter to the Congregation. As you pray and meditate on the Cross during this Lenten Season,

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YOUTH AND SUNDAY SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

★HAPPY★BIRTHDAY!

Matilda Petrosyan 4/3
Connor Overbay 4/16
Farrah Vartanian 4/18

Jacob Emerzian 4/23
Lexah Vartanian 4/28
David Ketendjian 4/29

**“May you be blessed by the Lord,
the Maker of Heaven and earth.”**

Psalm 115:15, NIV

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SUNDAY SCHOOL FRIENDS:

MIGHTY MEMORIZER HAS NEW LOOK

If you have not gotten a NEW Mighty Memorizer Book, pick one up at Sunday School AND get started on your way to being a Mighty Memorizer for 2020! Mighty Memorizer is fun, challenging and **A VERY REWARDING WAY** to learn God’s Word.



ONE NIGHT I DREAMED A DREAM...

I was walking along the beach with my Lord. Across the dark sky flashed scenes from my life. For each scene, I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand, one belonging to me and one to my Lord.

When the last scene of my life shot before me I looked back at the footprints in the sand. There was only one set of footprints. I realized that this was at the lowest and saddest times of my life. This always bothered me and I questioned the Lord about my dilemma.

“Lord, You told me when I decided to follow You, You would walk and talk with me all the way. But I’m aware that during the most troublesome times of my life there is only one set of footprints. I just don’t understand why, when I need You most, You leave me.”

He whispered, “My precious child, I love you and will never leave you, never, ever, during your trials and testings. When you saw only one set of footprints, It was then that I carried you.” – *Margaret Fishback Powers*



Moderator’s Report:

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and on the sacrifice that God made for us by sending His only son to redeem us from our sins, I ask you in brotherly love to consider returning to Him a portion of what He has bestowed upon you, for the advancement of His kingdom through our church.

We praise God for the opportunity to serve Him through Pilgrim Armenian Congregational Church,

“As it is, there are many parts, but one body.”

– 1 Corinthians 12:20 NIV

– *by Moderator Edward Saliba*



WORLD DAY OF PRAYER CELEBRATED

World Day of Prayer 2020 was hosted by the Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church on March 7. This year’s theme “Rise! Take your Mat and Walk ” was prepared by the WDP women of Zimbabwe.

Father Ashod Khachadourian opened the service with the Lord’s Prayer. Five young women walked into the sanctuary accompanied by African worship music and wearing Zimbabwean traditional clothes. They read letters from Zimbabwe.

The Bible reading was from John 5:2-9 where Jesus tells the paralyzed man lying by the pool to rise, take his mat and walk.

The story was also presented through a skit that the committee members performed beautifully. Our speaker Barbara Tirapelle did an amazing job giving the message of Jesus’ invitation to us all. Everyone received a small piece of material representing the mat as a reminder of this message.

The prayer time was both inspiring and heartfelt.

The love offering went toward WDP Zimbabwe, CAHL Armenian nursing home in Lebanon and Zvartnots School for Armenian children and young adults with special needs in Lebanon.

The service closed with Hayr Mer and benedictions from the clergy.

Following the service, everyone enjoyed a fabulous table prepared by the ladies of all participating churches.

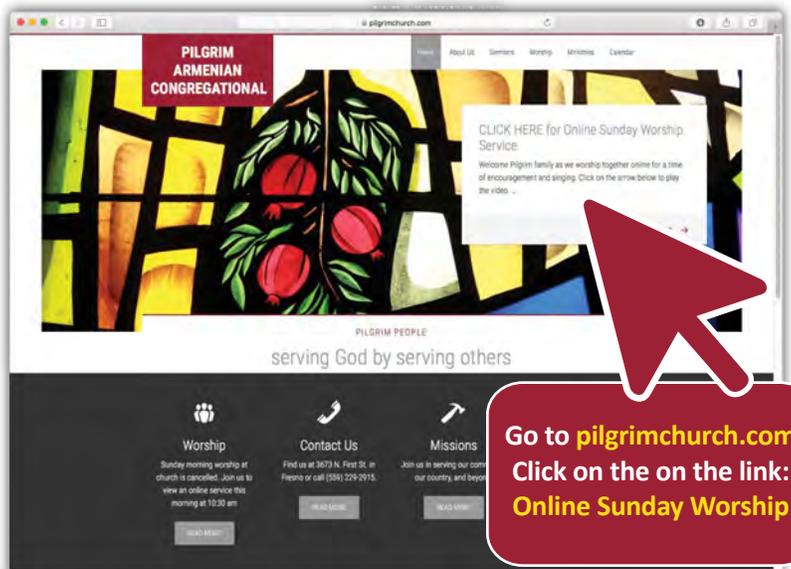
Sunday Morning Worship Heard Online!

As the impact of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) continues to evolve, we want to assure you, our valued members of the church, that we are monitoring the situation closely. We do so from a position of faith and trust in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and not from fear. Our greatest concern is for your health and safety, as well as our church staff and their families.

We want to let you know that we are here to support you. With that being said, and in accordance with the lock-down we will not be gathering for worship service on Sunday Morning. Instead you will have the capability of watching and listening to the Sunday worship service remotely from the comfort of your home by visiting the church's web page:

www.pilgrimchurch.com.

As always, we trust in God's plan and encourage you to trust in Him and not be afraid. Going forward, we will monitor and evaluate the COVID-19 situation regularly and update you with any further changes. We pray for health and peace during this challenging time.



Let us be faithful and vigilant in our prayer for those nations, communities, families and individuals most affected by this outbreak, and for the medical personnel and government officials seeking a solution. Above all, let us remember and rejoice that "nothing in life or n death can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord". (Romans: 8:38-39)