

GOOD NEWS



The Village Church *Good News* is published monthly (September-May) for all members and friends of the Village Presbyterian Church. Readers are encouraged to submit article ideas to The Department of Communications, 6641 Mission Road, Prairie Village, KS 66208, or call 913-671-2375 or email laura.davis@villagepres.org.

MAY 5, 2021

Preparing to Welcome You Back to In-Person Worship May 23

It's been almost 14 months since we gathered together inside the church buildings for in-person worship. After a long and thoughtful discussion at the April 12 Session meeting, our elders approved the recommendation of the Reopening Task Force to begin planning for the return of in-person worship on Pentecost Sunday, May 23.

"Pentecost is the day the Spirit fell on all the disciples and it says they were all in one room," said Rev. Tom Are, senior pastor. "To be in one room together will be a glorious thing. I have missed you and can't wait to see you. And I am eager for us to open these doors again."

Revised Worship Times and Online Registration - We will start with two Sunday services at our Mission Campus, one at 9 a.m. and one at 11 a.m. There will be a 10 a.m. Sunday service at our Antioch Campus. To ensure we have all the staff that's required for The Gathering service, we're going to delay that until June 6. You will need to register online. Each week in-person worship registration will open at 9 a.m. on Mondays and close at noon on Fridays.

We won't offer the nursery or children & youth activities to start. Children are encouraged to join families in worship.

Tom cautions, "Now this is not a return to our pre-COVID worship experience. We'll need to limit the number who can be in our sanctuaries. We're masking and there will be other safety protocols. We'll amend our worship to make sure that everyone is not only safe, but that we feel safe with one another."

Visit www.villagepres.org/welcomeback for in-person worship safety protocols and to register online.

Those without internet access who would like to register for in-person worship may do so by calling 913-262-4200 between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. If you are automatically receiving a call to listen to worship at 9:30 a.m. Sundays, we will move to a week-delayed broadcast on the phone livestream at 913-203-1301.

Capacity Limits - At first, we will limit capacity to 125 in the Village on Mission Sanctuary, 50 in the Village on Antioch Sanctuary and 40 in Friendship Hall at Village on Mission for The Gathering. We anticipate capacity will increase soon.

Guidance from the Reopening Task Force - Members of the Reopening Task Force include Rev. Tom Are, Jim Tilden (senior director of business operations), medical professionals and church members Dr. Barbara Bollier, Dr. John Hall and Dr. Scott Beall, public health professional and church member Donna Martin, church members Charlotte Davis, Tyler Nottberg and Drew Thomas, and community representative Kate Breytspraak.

Drew Thomas is an assistant principal at Santa Fe Middle School for the Olathe School District. Drew told Session what led to the task force recommendation to reopen worship at Village. "The progression of vaccinations along with the decrease of community spread within Johnson County and some of the surrounding areas played a lot into the factor. The students in my building have been full in-person for over a month now. I'm starting to look at what those practices would look like then in worship, and how we could make that possible based on our own experiences and also the medical advice."

There Will Be Beautiful Music but No Congregational Singing - "The wisdom of the Reopening Task Force is that singing is actually one of the activities where the most aerosols are spread—even with masks. So, to ensure comfort for everybody, we will start by not including congregational song," Tom advises. "There will be singing from the chancel. I think that will probably be one of the things that we relax once we get in and see how we're distanced and how we're sitting in pods spread out in the Sanctuary. But that was the recommendation of the Task Force to start off."

Continued

RETURNING TO IN-PERSON WORSHIP

Deciding What's Best for Your Family - Whether you plan to attend online-only for a while longer or feel comfortable coming back to in-person gatherings, we'll meet you where you are to help you stay connected to your Village Church family. "We will be transitioning from pre-recorded worship services to livestream for online worship," shares Tom. "We are working to provide the most magnetic worship both in our sanctuaries and online."

Encouraging You to Get Your COVID Vaccine - "Many of you have received vaccines. Many have not and are waiting your turn. And I hope that as soon as your turn becomes available, you'll be able to access that vaccine. That will make us all safer." Tom notes, "We're in an in-between time. It's clearly not the way it was, even just a few months ago, but this pandemic is not over yet either. So, as we live in the midst of this in-between time, we're trying to move forward in a way that is safe and also meaningful."

Prayers for Your Grace - Tom shares, "It was a difficult decision to suspend worship over a year ago, but it's a far more complicated decision about how and when to reopen. So, we solicit your prayers as we make these decisions and your leaders, lay leaders and staff engage in that process."

Plans are subject to change depending on the ongoing health situation in our community. We will continue to seek the guidance of our Reopening Task Force and Session for criteria to advance to the next phases of reopening.

Pentecost Sunday Special Witness Offering

On Pentecost Sunday, May 23, the Presbyterian Church (USA) invites congregations to participate in a special Witness Offering in addition to its regular giving. The Witness Offering supports Village Church, Heartland Presbytery, and General Assembly ministries involving at-risk children, youth, and young adults. If you wish to donate to this offering, send your gift to Village Presbyterian Church and write "Witness Offering" in the memo on your check. Thank you!

VILLAGE ON ANTIOCH

COVID-19 Vaccine Uptake Project

On April 6, Clare Stern-Burbano, the director of children and youth ministry at Village on Antioch, received a grant for \$1,500 from Interfaith Youth Core to encourage members of the Kansas City community to sign up and receive a COVID vaccine. In addition to a deep commitment to faith formation in young people, Clare's education is in public health with a minor in health education. Clare and her husband, Andy, will be working together to provide bilingual (Spanish and English) health education materials and host conversations about what the COVID-19 vaccine is as well as when and how to sign up. Village on Antioch will host one of these conversations. Clare also has strong ties to the Kansas City interfaith community and will be engaging other faith-based groups in this project as well.



Farewell to Laura Patton

Laura Patton served 2½ years as site and communications coordinator at Village on Antioch. She resigned from her position in early April. Rev. Dr. Rodger Nishioka shared, "Laura supported and enabled the ministry at Village on Antioch. She welcomed countless members and visitors and coordinated any number of outside groups as they partnered with us.



When we made the decision to create a pop-up food pantry, Laura single-handedly brought that into being. She created the sign-up system, reached out to potential guests, procured the food, secured a Johnson County grant for \$16,000 and created an ingenious packing and distribution process. During the last year, she has helped to feed thousands of persons."

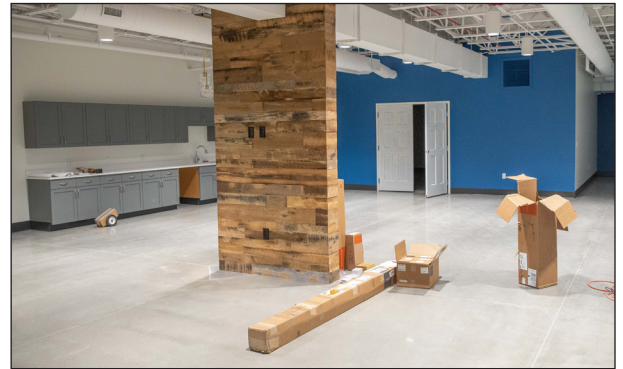
"I am grateful to Laura for her amazing work among us," added Rodger. "She will be greatly missed."

Wandering No More—Young Adult Space Complete

The Young Adult space is almost finished! While we'll be spending the next few months working with our young adult leadership team to furnish the space, the construction is complete. A few notes about our design choices:

The accent walls are blue ("Soul Search") and green ("Kale Green"). Besides being incredibly millennial-sounding names, our young adults have wanted for natural colors to complement the natural wood also featured in the room. These colors will be lifted up again as the room is furnished in an abundance of plants.

The room will allow multiple ways for individuals and groups to use the space. It is our hope that keeping the room open during the weekdays will encourage young adults without office space to work here, as well as being a place for moms using our child care to find some alone time. The room will include individual bar-top seating with plenty of outlets, two-person tables, a conference room with accessible technology, and several sofa spaces.



The biggest piece of designed furniture we're working on is an 18-foot table that will be positioned under the chandeliers on the east side of the room. This table will accomplish something we haven't previously been able to do—eat together.

Our young adults will gather at 7 p.m. on May 20 to bless the space and pray for its future use. We plan to begin using the room for ministry in the fall, after our community has had the opportunity to be vaccinated.

A Stephen Ministry Care Receiver Shares Her Story

Why meet with a Stephen Minister?

"I was experiencing major life stressors and my coping mechanisms were exhausted."

How did you connect with a Stephen Minister?

"Village Church helped me find Stephen Minister Renny Arensberg. She is an empathetic listener who allows me to verbalize my issues and concerns in a safe and confidential environment," she stressed. "She brings calmness and comfort to my world."

What is a Stephen Minister's role with a care receiver?

"We have a system to match someone who is grieving, or otherwise going through a hard time, with a Stephen Minister who can support them," Renny explains. "Then we listen, care, encourage and provide emotional and spiritual support." There are over 70 Stephen Ministers at Village Church.

Interested?

Interested in meeting with a Stephen Minister or learning about training to become one? Contact Rev. Melanie Hardison at melanie.hardison@villagepres.org or 913-713-3098.

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 Dane & Sherry Manis
 Beth & Andrea Woolcott
 Beth & Andrea Woolcott
 Pam & Brett Wood
 Pam & Brett Wood
 Lucy Tidwell
 Laura Ann Bowen
 Peggy & Jim Gray



A New Chapter for Matthew Shepard

Matthew Christopher Shepard has served as associate director of music at Village Church on Mission since 2009. His days at Village began as intern in the Village choir from 2001-2003. At the time, Matthew was a vocal performance and church music major at William Jewell College. Part of his degree required an internship. "Mark Ball [former Village Church music director 2001-2016] was my voice teacher when I was in high school, so when I needed an internship, I turned to him." After graduating from college, he was Village's youth choir director from 2003-2009.

In 2008, Matthew founded Te Deum Chamber Choir, a choral ensemble that brings a diverse, international repertoire of sacred music to Kansas City and the surrounding area. He is also Te Deum's executive and artistic director. Music Reporter Patrick Neas wrote in the Kansas City Star, "Choral music cognoscenti know that Te Deum Chamber Choir presents some of the most sublime concerts in town."

As associate director of music at Village Church, he directs the Village Voices Youth Choir and More Love Chorale, the Village Brass and Morning Bells. In addition, he works with the Music Ministry team to plan worship and other events in the church.

Last summer Matthew married concert pianist Sora Park. And now they prepare for another big life change. This fall Matthew begins a new chapter as a teaching assistant pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts in choral conducting at the University of Illinois. He'll be splitting his time between Champaign-Urbana, Illinois and Kansas City, continuing his role as Te Deum's executive and artistic director.

Assistant director of youth ministry, Jenna Soltys, has traveled with Matthew for the Village Voices summer choir tours. She is also a Village Voices alum. "Village Voices was really the thing that first drew me in to the youth ministry as a middle schooler at Village," recalls Jenna. "For a while I showed up just because I loved singing, but Matthew does such a good job of balancing hard work with fun and encouragement, but over time I made friendships that have lasted well beyond our singing days! He is going to be so missed by Village Voices and the youth department."

Matthew's longtime music ministry colleague and friend, Dr. Elisa Bickers said, "It was pretty clear to me early on in my time at Village that Matthew was my musical soul mate. Every time we get together to work out a piece, we dive head-first into both the intricacies and important wider-angles of the music. Those conversations always made me a better musician, and widen my perspective. Whether within the walls of Village, the stage of the Kauffman Center, or the cathedrals of Europe, many of my mountaintop musical experiences have happened with my friend Matthew, and I will always treasure those."

Matthew's last day at Village will be May 23. He and Sora will take the summer to get things in order in KC and prepare for their time in Illinois.

To his Village family he says, "For nearly two decades Village Church nurtured, encouraged and cared for me. Colleagues believed in me, and choir members gave me the grace I needed to grow and learn as a conductor. Nearly everything I understand about how to make music, and most especially WHY to make it, comes from Mark Ball and Village Church. Thank you. Peace and blessings to you all!"



Matthew and Sora



Village Voices Summer Choir Tour



MAY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

May 11 – Village U Class: Feelings: Yours, Mine and Ours taught by Rev. Sally Wright from 6:30-8 p.m. Tuesday, May 11, in Rooms 232 & 233 at Village on Mission. Feelings are given to us by God, so how can we use them to benefit us and not hold us back? Using the Stephen Ministry resources, we will remember that Jesus himself expressed deep feelings, and we'll learn to distinguish between different kinds of feelings including primary and secondary feelings.

May 12

Neighborhood BBQ & Family Fun from 4:30-6:30 p.m. Wednesday, May 12, in the Village on Mission south parking lot. Order your \$5 BBQ dinner prepared by Chef Andrea and Chef Larry by noon Monday, May 10. We'll have live music by the Nick + Anna duo and kids activities, too. Bring your lawn chairs. Order your BBQ dinner and get more details about the event at www.villagepres.org/bbq.

Village U Class: An Evening with Arlin Buyert, Village church member and poet, and hosted by Rev. Dr. Rodger Nishioka from 6:30-8 p.m. Wednesday, May 12, in Rooms 126 & 127 at Village on Mission. Arlin has published six books of poetry and taught poetry to a group of inmates at Lansing Prison in Lansing, Kansas. During this evening, he will read some of his poetry and will share thoughts and reflections on his writing process and inspiration.

May 13 – Second Thursday Online Recital with cellist Eman Chalshotori and pianist Melody Stroth from 12:15-12:45 p.m. Thursday, May 13. Eman Chalshotori is the principal cellist of the Topeka Symphony and associate principal cellist for the Symphony of Northwest Arkansas. He'll be joined by pianist Melody Stroth. The recital will be livestreamed at villagepres.org/online, facebook.com/villagechurchmusic and on the Village Church Music YouTube Channel. The concert is followed by a Meet the Artist Reception on Zoom. Email carol.dale@villagepres.org for the Zoom link.

May 18

Taizé Worship: Join us at 7 p.m. Tuesday, May 18, in the Village on Mission Sanctuary for our Taizé worship service led by Rev. Melanie Hardison, Dr. Elisa Bickers and Will Breytspraak. Participants will be seated a safe distance apart and must remain masked for the duration of this service. Email carol.dale@villagepres.org to sign up.

Village U Class: The Art of Listening taught by Rev. Sally Wright from 6:30-8 p.m. Tuesday, May 18, in Rooms 232 & 233 at Village on Mission. We will learn practical tips for improving our listening skills in our relationships. Using Stephen Ministry resources, we will learn active listening skills, how to ask clarifying questions, and characteristics of effective listeners.

May 19 - Village U Class: An Evening with Priscilla Wilson, Village church member and writer, and hosted by Rev. Dr. Rodger Nishioka from 6:30-8 p.m. in Room 126 & 127 at Village on Mission. Priscilla has authored four books and is completing her fifth. During this evening, she will read from her new autobiography and share her thoughts and reflections.

May 23 - Return to In-Person Worship on Pentecost Sunday. Services are Sundays at 9 and 11 a.m. in the Village on Mission Sanctuary and a 10 a.m. service in the Village on Antioch Sanctuary. Get more information at www.villagepres.org/welcomeback.

May 24 - Marvelous Music Movies "The Music of Strangers: Yo-Yo Ma and the Silk Road Ensemble." This Village U class led by Will Breytspraak and Carol Dale is at 7 p.m. on Zoom. Sign up on Village U. Mike Block, cellist with the Silk Road Ensemble, and cellist Michael Mermagen will be on our Zoom call to discuss the movie. The film will be shown at 8:30 p.m. Friday, May 28, in the south parking lot of Village on Mission.

Visit www.villagepres.org/upcoming-events or www.villagepres.org/village-u-community-classes for details and to register.



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Vol. 59, No. 5

YOUR SUPPORT IS SHAPING OUR FUTURE



Our Village Youth are the future of our Church. When these children are baptized, we promise to care for them as family. We help to raise them to adulthood through Sunday School, daycare, Saturday nights out, youth group, service opportunities and just friendly support through peers and ministers. Our Church is a safe place for these youth—a home away from home where they are loved and supported. Because of your generous gifts of time, talent and financial support, we all accomplish much in the raising of our kids. Thank you, Village, for being you!

—Village Giving Committee

ONLINE WORSHIP SCHEDULE THROUGH MAY 16

8, 9:30 and 11 a.m. Sundays
villagepres.org/online

The Gathering Music and Prayers
5 p.m. Sundays
vpcthegathering.org

Call In to hear the
9:30 a.m. worship service
913-203-1301

Listen to Worship on 1660 AM
8 a.m. Sundays - a week-delayed
radio broadcast of the
morning worship service

See Page 1 for worship time
changes starting May 23.

IN MEMORY

Jane Davis
Dee Petty
Ed Reed
Richard "Dick" Reese
Don Wilson