



April 22, 2020

Dear Church Family,

In recent days, we have all been hearing the debate and discussion about when and how to reopen our economy; and of course, we have been paying particular attention to the corresponding conversations about when and how *churches* should reopen. In fact, as recently as today, our governor announced that public schools in our state will not reopen until the Fall. Still, there are those who believe we should reopen our church immediately and without restriction, and others who believe we should continue to suspend our in-person gatherings indefinitely. Between those views is a whole range of options that include a phased-in approach based on guidance that we receive from medical experts and the governmental authorities. And all those views are represented by people in our church who love our church and want what is best for it. But because our church members have such a wide range of viewpoints, it has become apparent to me that not everyone in our church will agree with whatever decision we make about when and how to reopen our church.

But, of course, members of our church family have *always* had divergent views on a *lot* of issues. I actually think that is one of our strengths. Just like any other healthy family, we have learned through the years how to manage our differences while still maintaining our unity. We have learned how to disagree without being disagreeable. We have learned how to be respectful of people who see the world differently than we do. And all that is because we agree on what matters the most: God's grace in Jesus Christ and our faith in Him. At Earle Street, we are determined to keep our focus on Jesus, who taught us and showed us how to live a "greater way."

When we do begin gathering - - whenever and however that happens - - some of us will be so glad to see each other that we will want to shake hands and embrace each other warmly and enthusiastically. Others of us will be just as glad to see each other, but will want to remain socially distant. We all want to be together again in person. But how we go about doing that will require mutual sensitivity and respect; and many of us are preparing for a new reality whenever and however we reopen.

As we prepare for that time, our ministers have been participating in webinars led by people who represent a wide spectrum of denominations, congregation sizes, and worship styles - - trying to learn from other churches as much as we can about how to handle issues including choirs, communion, baptism, collecting the offering, greeting one another, small-group in-person gatherings, sanctuary and overflow capacity, parking, preschool and children's gatherings, facility sanitation and sterilization, weddings, funerals, coffee stations, Wednesday evening meals and activities, greeters, replacing volunteers who no longer feel comfortable fulfilling their responsibilities, Sunday School curriculum, budget adjustments and reallocations, and shifting staff responsibilities. The ripple effects of all this are staggering. And what makes these issues even more complicated is that there are no "best practices" out there since churches have never had to

deal with anything like this before. There are only “emerging practices” that churches are trying for the very first time. The learning curve is steep, especially for those of us who have been doing church the same way for a long time. So we are doing our best to gather as much information as we can from some of the most well-respected leaders in church life.

But when it comes right down to it, no one knows what is best for our particular church better than the servants you have chosen to lead our congregation. The reopening of churches in our country, or even in our state, will not be a one-size-fits-all process. We will receive guidance from the medical experts and governmental authorities. We will consult with widely respected church leaders about how they are leading their congregations through these unprecedented times. But at the local church level, when our particular church makes our decisions, we will be relying on the eighteen deacons elected directly by our congregation as well as our six staff ministers. And while our decisions are guaranteed not to please everyone, we are appealing to you for your prayers, trust, and cooperation as we move through these unusual times.

Over the past eighteen years since I have been at Earle Street, we have developed a relationship of trust. When our congregation has made difficult decisions and I was not sure what we should do, I trusted this church to make wise and timely decisions. You have never disappointed me. In the same way, there have been times when our congregation has had to trust our leaders. You may not have always agreed with us; but I hope you have always been able to trust that we love our church and will always do what we believe is best for this family of faith. I also hope you know us well enough to know that we are determined *not* to politicize these conversations, but to make prayerful decisions that we believe will honor God and protect the unity of our congregation and the effectiveness of our church’s missions and ministries.

So I am asking you now to be patient and prayerful as we move into an uncertain future that God has in store for us. Pray for our ministers and our deacons as we make decisions that will glorify God, strengthen our witness, build up the body of Christ, and enable us to live “the greater way” with more vitality than ever before. And above all, trust God to work in all of this for God’s glory and for our good. Life is hard, but God is faithful. And there is no congregation on earth with whom I would rather be on this journey than you.

I love you and miss you, and long for the day when we can all be together again.

With love,

Stephen

THE HOME PAGE

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FROM THE PASTOR Stephen Clyborne

Every week when I receive the report of offerings received, I am utterly amazed and profoundly thankful. I am not sure why I am amazed because our church has always been so consistently faithful and generous. But these are unprecedented times. In the course of the past month, many people in our church family have lost their jobs, their livelihood, and their financial security. And yet, at a time when many people are not able to support the church at the same level because of a dramatic loss of income, apparently some people in our church are giving even more than before. I have never known, nor do I want to know, who gives what. But when I look at the total figures, this is what I see:

As of this week, we have missed six Sundays worshipping together in person. At the beginning of this six-week period (March 15), our budget offerings were already \$47,068 ahead of our budget requirements. After six weeks of not gathering in person, our offerings are still \$47,724 ahead of our budget requirements!

In addition to our budget offerings, during this same six-week period of time, our church has given:

- \$5,992 to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions. (We still need \$4,008 to meet our offering goal of \$10,000).
- \$1,015 to Coronavirus Relief (to provide support and emergency assistance to local mission partners and other essential service providers in our community)
- \$1,668 to Earle Street Academy (to support our own employees who are out of work while the Academy's income from tuition has been dramatically reduced)
- \$2,098 to our Benevolence Fund (to provide urgent, short-term emergency relief to our own church members who have been affected by the economic shutdown)

All this is not to mention all the non-financial support members and groups in our church have offered to people in need. I hear stories everyday of how our church is living "the greater way," finding creative ways to love our neighbors and make disciples. And it all grows out of your love for God.

Even though I cannot see you in person, I am so thankful for the ways I can still see the effects of your faithfulness and generosity. As I said when all of this began, "Life is hard, but God is faithful." And one of the most profound ways I have seen God's faithfulness during these unsettling times is through the faithfulness of God's people.

With a grateful heart,
Stephen

WORSHIP VIDEO REMINDERS

As a reminder, you can access our weekly worship videos on Facebook, YouTube and our website. If you've not done so already, email info@esbcgreenville.org to be added to our mailing list. You will receive the newsletter electronically, a sermon preview and a direct link to the worship video.

If you already subscribe to our YouTube channel, make sure you click on the bell on our channel page. This enables you to receive notifications when one of our videos is live! If you have any questions, please email Ellen Heyward at ellen@esbcgreenville.org.



Love

YOUR NEIGHBOR

LIVING THE GREATER WAY AT A DISTANCE: GIFTS TO AND THROUGH OUR CHURCH

These unsettling times have presented us with new reasons and new opportunities to live, love, and give “the greater way.” Thank you so much for your continued faithfulness and generosity in supporting our church. You may mail your offerings to ESBC, 225 West Earle Street – Greenville, SC 29609 or give online through our website: www.esbcgreenville.org.

If you would like to give over and above your regular tithes and offerings to the church, you may designate an offering in one or more of these ways:

Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions (AAEO) – Many Baptist missionaries in North America are dependent upon this offering for their livelihood and support. With regular offerings being interrupted by the Coronavirus pandemic, there is an urgent need to support our missionaries so they will not have to be furloughed. Our church offering goal is \$10,000. So far, we have received \$5,992 toward that goal. Make your gift to ESBC, and designate it for the AAEO.

Benevolence Fund – This is a fund to provide temporary, short-term financial assistance for church members who need emergency relief because of the impact of the Coronavirus or for another legitimate reason. This fund is administered by the Benevolence Committee in compliance with approved policies based on needs and availability of funds. Make your gift to ESBC and designate it for the Benevolence Fund.

Coronavirus Relief – Some of our local mission partners are facing critical times and are asking for urgent help. Our Mission Cluster Deacons are monitoring the needs and are channeling available funds from our church to help meet those needs. Make your gift to ESBC and designate it for Coronavirus Relief.

Earle Street Academy – Because our weekday preschool program is supported by tuition, and because income from tuition has been greatly reduced, our church wants to take care of our own employees until the income stream is flowing again. Make your gift to ESBC and designate it for the ESA.

Some church members have contacted the church office to let us know that they plan to designate the money they receive from the government stimulus package to one or more of these causes. Prayerfully consider how God has blessed you and how you can bless others through your gifts to and through our church.

HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE GRADUATES

If you have a senior graduating from high school or college that you would like to be recognized, please let Lucy Wilkinson (High School) or Chuck Emory (College) know by Wednesday, May 8. Contact Lucy at lucy@esbcgreenville.org and Chuck at chuck@esbcgreenville.org.

COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS AVAILABLE

Scholarship applications are available for members of the high school graduating class of 2020. In order to qualify for consideration, an applicant must be a church member, or a child of a church member, who has been accepted to any accredited college or university. Please contact Chuck Emory at chuck@esbcgreenville.org to obtain an application and for more information.

BUDGET REPORT

Sunday, April 19, 2020

Weekly Budget Requirements.....	\$28,228
Budget Gifts.....	\$23,356
Budget Requirements to Date	\$451,648
Budget Gifts to Date	\$499,372

EVENTS POSTPONED

Golf Tournament - October 31

EVENTS CANCELLED

Operation Inasmuch - April 25

PRAYER VINE MINISTRY

PRAYER VINE FOR URGENT PRAYER NEEDS

There are now three ways to access the church prayer vine.

1. Text or call Kathy Kincaid at 864-430-3521.
2. Email Frank Tedards at tedardsf@gmail.com.
3. Call Alver Maheras at 864-233-1047.

From the Minister Of Music and Worship

Janice Hinnant (ext. 202) – janice@ESBCgreenville.org

This Sunday, April 26, is Preschool and Children's Sunday, and we would have heard our three children's choirs sing in worship, and we are all sad we will not get to hear our sweet choirs. We had approximately 50 preschoolers and children participating in our choirs this year. I am so grateful for a church that supports this music ministry, and I am most grateful for the people who give their time each week to work with these children. I would like to thank our directors and leaders who make this ministry possible: Lisa Brigman, LeAnne Hines, and Jennifer Broome (Preschool Choir); Rosemary Cureton, Tammy Dowdy, and Paula Hayes (Music Makers); and Debbie Blume, Hannah Grace Kincaid, Brantley Shugart, and Phil Plumblee (Young Musicians). I know this is not how we wanted to end the choir year, but we appreciate you and thank you for everything!

NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER

Thursday, May 7

Theme: Pray God's Glory Across The Earth

Scripture: Habakkuk 2:14

On Thursday, May 7, citizens of the United States will exercise their freedom to worship and pray in observance of the annual National Day of Prayer. The Prayer Team encourages you to set aside a time on that day to intercede on behalf of our world, our country, our communities, our churches, and our families. Plan to set aside 30-60 minutes so you will have time to pray for all of these concerns.

There has never been a time when there has been such a need for prayer in our country and our world. There will also be a National Day of Prayer broadcast on May 7th from 8:00 - 10:00 pm. It will be broadcast on some religious networks and on Facebook live.

JOIN US IN PRAYER

The Prayer Team of ESBC encourages us to pray daily for the many needs and requests surrounding the public health situation. You are invited and encouraged to stop at 12:00 noon each day and join with others from our church family in lifting our prayers to our Father.

From the Minister Of Administration

Denise Plumblee (ext. 211) – denise@ESBCgreenville.org

FINANCIAL NOTES

We continue to be thankful for the generous way you have supported our church with your giving during this unique time. You may continue to give online through our web site or by mailing your gift to the church. While our office hours are limited right now, we continue to check the mail twice a week and process a weekly deposit to the bank. If you choose to mail your gift to the church, it may take a few days longer for your check to clear your bank due to this once-a-week processing. Thank you for your patience and continued support!

From the Minister of Youth and Recreation

Lucy Wilkinson (ext. 212) – lucy@ESBCgreenville.org

YOUTH AND ADULT SUMMER TRIPS UPDATE

Below are the three trips that we have planned this summer. I covet your prayers for wisdom and peace!

Look Up Lodge (June 7-12th)

Look Up is still planning on running as scheduled and no changes have been announced. I know our youth are really hoping we can go and I am too.

Bronx Mission Trip (June 27th - July 4th)

The staff at A House on Beekman made the difficult decision last week to change their traditional summer camp to an online experience. Our team will not be traveling to NYC like we normally do but will instead be tasked with creating an online summer camp experience for the kids. Please pray for the people in NYC and in the Bronx to stay healthy and to be open to this new way of learning this summer. Also, our team asks for your prayers as we create this experience for them. I love this note from AHOB and pray that it serves as a prayer focus for us "Oh, how naïve we would be to think that not being in person would prevent our great King from displaying his power and love".

Thailand Mission Trip (July 14-27th)

At this point, we are too far out to make any changes to this trip. We are still prayerful that we can go soon- either this summer or next. Please pray that God makes the decision clear for us.

From the Associate Pastor

Chuck Emory (ext. 203) – chuck@ESBCgreenville.org

MISSIONS UPDATE

Local Missions

As we have reported recently, in addition to finding ways to stay connected to each other and to God, we have also been finding ways to stay connected to our neighbors through local missions. Here are a few recent updates:

- On Easter weekend, Rev. Alfred Johnson of the Greenville Church Without Walls delivered (in a masked and socially distant way) 200 Easter baskets to the children of the Berkley Pointe apartment community. Many of those baskets were prepared by our Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) and were filled with candy, games, writing supplies, and other treats. There were even some age-appropriate bags for teenagers. Alfred said the children were so excited, and the parents were so thankful – many parents shared that they had lost their jobs and could not afford to provide Easter baskets for their children this year.
- On Friday, April 10, we provided tacos from downtown Greenville's Papi's Tacos to the medical professionals working in the COVID-19 Unit of St. Francis Downtown Hospital. In addition to the tacos, we also sent a poster thanking those workers for their service, letting them know we are praying for them, and inviting them to send us their prayer requests. All in all, we provided enough tacos to feed both shifts that day. And, by all accounts, they were touched by the gesture and excited about the tacos!
- On Thursday, April 16, we donated two boxes of coffee (nearly 100 packets), a box of toilet paper (96 rolls), and a substantial financial donation to the Greenville Rescue Mission (GRM). David Hanna, the director of the GRM, had informed us that those three things – coffee, toilet paper, and money – were the GRM's greatest needs. He was grateful and happy for the donations.
- On Friday, April 17, we provided 75 meals from the Travelers Rest Chick-fil-A to the medical professionals working at North Greenville Hospital, which is now dedicated to caring for COVID-19 patients. We made one delivery of 30 meals to feed the 7am-7pm shift, and a second delivery of 45 meals for the 7pm-7am shift. Like the workers at St. Francis, those folks are definitely serving on the front lines of the pandemic, and they were extremely thankful for the food and the thought behind it.

Disaster Relief – Seneca Tornado Recovery

We have received some inquiries about ways we can help in the wake of the destructive tornado last week just down the road in Seneca, South Carolina. An article, found at www.wyff4.com/article/city-of-seneca-and-oconee-county-are-asking-for-volunteers-in-tornado-relief-response/32200154, discusses the recovery efforts and mentions a number of ways to help. As a church, we are in the process of supporting the feeding services in the community, but there are several options for individuals to volunteer as well. Take a look and see if there is a way you can get involved. If you have questions or need assistance, please contact me at chuck@esbcgreenville.org or Mike Brown at mikeb12073@aol.com.

Currently, officials have a significant need for the following donated items to support recovery efforts in the community:

- Large size tarps, 20 feet and larger
- 10 feet by 10 feet pop-up tents
- Shoe covers
- Non-latex gloves
- All types of batteries
- Baby formula
- Toilet paper and paper towels
- Disposable plates and plastic utensils
- Various types of residential cleaning products
- Flashlights
- Hand soap
- Work gloves
- Feminine hygiene products